Harry Connick: No one more excited about singing in HP than I
ENTERTAINMENT / H4

No. 3 in succession moves No. 9 ahead of massive Makati rally
NEWS / A4

PHILIPPINE Sunday INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS
Sunday, March 2, 2008 4-A Vol. 22 / No. 50 www.inquirer.net

LESSON FROM THE CARABAO
Drive outside Metro Manila and see this rather common scene of a carabao hanging in a sea of grass. Take it from the carabao. Lazing about is good to do this weekend after the past week's exertions and uncertainties.

Noli de Castro prepared

VP says that's not the same as 'preparing to take over' from GMA

By Cynthia D. Balana

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO YESTERDAY DECLARED he was "prepared, not preparing," to take over the presidency in the event of President Macapagal-Arroyo's resignation or ouster as a result of the political tumult triggered by the National Broadband Network (NBN) scandal.

Speaking on his weekly radio program, "Ronda Sa Iyo, Bayan," De Castro said it was his constitutional duty as Vice President to assume the presidency in case of a vacancy.

"From Day 1, I already knew my duties under the Constitution as the elected Vice President. I'm prepared for that," said the former broadcast journalist who was elected senator in 2001 and Vice President in 2004.

"That's my mandate from the over 15 million people who voted for me. The young implements of humanity..."

(There's a difference between preparing and being prepared)," he said, adding that when he became Vice President, he was "already prepared."

De Castro was commenting on reports that he was in touch with opposition groups and prominent personalities involved in the protest actions denouncing the truth behind the scrapped NBN deal with China's ZTE Corp., as well as the resignation of Mr. Romulo.

Those groups and personalities are...

CLARIFICATION PLEASE: De Castro says he's prepared but not preparing.

Lozada tells it like it is:
Jedi, moderate greed 'bubukol'

By Inquirer Research

Part of the reason for the anti-Arroyo public's adulation of Rodolfo Noel Lozada Jr., the Senate's star witness in its inquiry into the controversial NBN-ZTE deal, is the seemingly innocent but telling way in which he expresses himself. The following is a list of the words and expressions that are vintage Lozada, which have fired up the outrage of the streets.

Levitangulator hanged Jueteng accused Jiong Joliponte has.

On his arrival from Hong Kong on Feb. 5, Lozada was met by men sent by Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, who took him on a six-hour car ride. He said he began to fear for his life when his escort refused to say where they were going. A telecommunications expert, Lozada joined his brother, telling him that he had been abducted and instructing him to "triangulate and find this signal."

Triangulation is a technique used to pinpoint the location of a mobile phone. This is done by measuring the distance the phone's signal has to travel to reach the nearest cell towers.

LOZADA, A8

P6-B UP-based IT park first of its kind in RP

By TJ Burgonio

A UNIVERSITY-BASED IT PARK, deemed the first of its kind in Metro Manila, is fast rising at an idle property of the University of the Philippines in Diliman, Quezon City.

The P6-billion UP North Science & Technology Park is now drawing attention because of not only the brisk pace of construction but its reported potential benefits for the academe and the IT industry.

When it starts operations at the end of 2009, the park is expected to become the hub of IT and BPO (business process outsourcing) multinational companies.

The prospective locators include HSBC, IBM, Convergys, Manulife and Petronas, as well as Globehaven Corp., among other outsourcing and software development firms, said Prof. Ruperto Alonzo, UP vice president for development, who is in charge of the project.

"We're hoping that this area will bring-in-tel IT and IT-enabled services," he said in an interview last month.

Ayala Land Inc. (ALI) is developing the IT park on a 37.5-hectare site on Commonwealth Avenue near the corner of Elliptical Road under a 25-year lease agreement with UP.

The partnership is also the first of its kind.

The site is part of the sprawling 94.5-hectare UP property on that busy thoroughfare, which includes the hallowed Academic Oval.

The IT park is one of the university's revenue-land projects under UP president Emerlinda Roman

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'Cory, Erap shouldn't have gone up'

Some organizers of Friday protest rally decry their presence on stage

By Beverly T. Heinzelet

AS FAR AS SOME OF THE ORGANIZERS OF FRIday's interfaith rally are concerned, former Presidents Corazon Aquino and Joseph Estrada should not have been allowed to go up on stage in order to maintain the rally's focus on prayer instead of political personalities.

Rally organizers had earlier agreed that politicians would not be allowed to speak at the gathering of religious groups and students.

Cubao...

Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez, who was earlier reported to have "walked out" of the rally when Estrada showed up on stage, clarified that he left the stage with other religious leaders to give way to the second half of the program and not because of Estrada.

But Iñiguez reiterated that the organizers had indeed agreed that no politicians were to be allowed to speak on stage.

Msgr. Gerry Santos, NCR director of the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP-NCR), also expressed disappointment over the incident.

"I did not like that. They should have followed what was agreed upon. The other organizers should explain to us what happened," Santos told the Inquirer.

Santos said they were caught by surprise when the two former presidents were invited on stage.

CEAP-NCR is one of five groups under the umbrella organization "Hindi Pera-pera Ito." The other groups are the Parish Pastoral Council for Responsible Voting (PPCRV), Association of the Major Religious Superiors of the Philippines (AMRSP), Manila Archdiocesan Parochial Schools (Mapas) and Ateneo de Manila's Ibefiallatang Lingkod Bayan.

On the other hand, Fr. Joe Dizon, Solidarity Philippines convenor and one of the organizers of the rally, appealed to the rally organizers not to make a big issue out of Aquino's and Estrada's appearance.

He said they gave way to the two former presidents out of respect and protocol, and that was, in keeping with the no-politician agreement, only granted the crowd and did not make any statements.

Dizon explained that Major Jejomar Binay, as the mayor of Makati, was invited on stage to greet the assembly. Binay then acknowledged the presence of Aquino and Estrada and called them up on stage out of courtesy and respect.

The organizers, he said, had also originally planned to allow Aquino and Estrada to briefly greet the assembly before the interfaith prayer rally started. The rally, however, started before the two leaders arrived.

"We make no issue out of it? This is supposed to be a good sign rather than anything else ... due to Gloria, everyone, even those who used to be on opposite sides, are now uniting," said Dizon.

Despite the bickering, Dizon said the rally of the youth and religious sectors was a success and it was time for Mr. Arroyo to "read the handwriting on the wall."

A spokesperson for Binay in a text statement noted the lasting Estrada's presence in the rally was a sign that "it is no longer only the few members of civil society who are calling for the truth, but also the poor whom Erap represents.

Spokesperson Margaux Salcedo said Estrada reminded the President "who won with the largest margin ever in the history of Philippine elections. "No one can deny that Joseph Estrada continues to stand today as the hallow of the Filipino's masses, champion of the poor and a living symbol of Philippine democracy at work," she said.

Salcedo said Malacañang's threat to withdraw the unnecessary perks granted to Estrada after he was convicted of plunder was tantamount to "stifling freedom of speech."

WHAT'S INSIDE

INT'L RIGHTS advocates back RP newsmen's fight vs killings /A9

FISHERS SEEK probe of alleged Spratlys deal /A5

Charges mulled vs officials who blocked protesters

By Julie M. Aurelio
and Aksan Pajo

THE UNITED OPPOSITION is studying charges against government officials who allegedly harassed and prevented protestors from Southern Luzon and parts of Metro Manila from joining Friday's interfaith rally in Makati City.

Lawyer Ariel Tarrazona, UNO spokesperson, said head the legal team had already been tasked with study the charges to be filed.

"We are seriously contemplating filing charges against the government officials who were responsible for harassing and preventing people from exercising their Constitutional rights," said UNO president and Makati City Mayor Jejomar Binay.

Several students from the University of the Philippines in Diliman were stopped from marching on the Philcoa in Quezon City on Friday afternoon while hundreds of students from De La Salle University in Dasmariñas, Cavite were likewise prevented from going to the rally.

Bagong Alyansang Makabayan media office Arnold Padilla said planned that a contingent of protestors in several jeepneys were stopped by police in Calbayan, Laguna, early Friday morning.

UNO is in the process of getting statements from the groups that were stopped by police in various places in Metro Manila and Southern Luzon.

"The opposition is already coordinating with the organizers of those marches and we have start of getting the statements from the participants," Binay said.

He also deplored the military's claim of a supposed plot to bomb the rally, and the deployment of battalions of troops for ready troops and tanks to nearby Fort Bonifacio.

"The administration put on a massive but ineffective show of force to prevent people from attending the interfaith rally. But the numbers speak eloquently about the level of disgust over the government," the mayor said.

Binay also slammed the "no fly zone" policy enforced in Makati City by the Air Transportation Office on Friday afternoon.

The Skyguard choppers of ABS-CBN, which was using live aerial shots of the rally, was ordered out of the area because of the sudden "no fly zone" declaration.

"The action of the Philippine National Police and the AFP is another infringement on the exercise of press freedom. It is intended to stop media from performing their work, preventing people from hearing the message in the massive rally," Binay said.

Police, however, said they would not and did not prevent protestors from the provinces from traveling to Metro Manila to join the protest actions.

PNP Director General Avelino Razon and yesterday police spokesperson Jose Rommel Balmaceda said Friday were meant to guard against the entry of firearms, explosives and deadly weapons into the metropolis.

"This is our final word on the issue. The checkpoints were established principally to check the presence of firearms, explosives and deadly weapons," Razon told the Inquirer yesterday.

He added that the police had an obligation to secure those attending the rallies.

Razon explained they didn't want a repeat of the Plaza Miranda bombing in the 1970s. "That is the reason why the checkpoints were established."

He said the police respected the rights of citizens to freely assemble.

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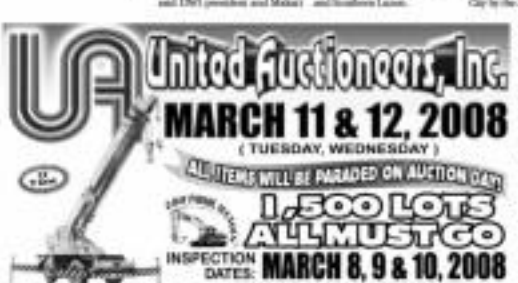

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Cops held Trillanes staffers after rally

By Julie M. Aurelio

FOUR MEMBERS OF OUTGOING SEN. ANTONIO Trillanes IV's staff were temporarily held by police Friday night as they were about to leave the interfaith rally in Makati City.

Operatives of the Southern Police District intelligence and investigation unit arrested Ben Ben de Vera and Makati Councilor Ado Reyes while they were aboard a green van.

Police claimed that the four—identified as retired Master Sergeants Bernardo Bull and Rommel Felix, Jerry Delfin and Chito Ponno—were suspected of scanning mental spillers in the area.

Senior Supt. Gerardo Chief Supt. Lutas Tamano said the four were released after the complaining witness did not press charges.

"They were suspected of being responsible for the spikes, so they were invited for questioning. But they were released later in the night. They were not detained," said Tamano.

But lawyer Roger Contreras slammed the action as harassment and "more of an abduction."

"This is already kidnapping. We are being given an insight into how forced disappearances are done, especially after rallies," he told the Inquirer in a phone interview.

Contreras said he planned to file charges of illegal arrest and detention against Tamano and other SPD officials.

Contreras was one of the militants charged along with Magdalo soldiers in the Nov. 29 Peninsula Manila hotel mutiny.

Tamano replied: "If that's what he wants. But I maintain that the four men were not arrested. If I were, then they wouldn't have been released."

Contreras said he was informed of the staffers' predicament when Bull called him up to ask for help. The lawyer had just left the Makati rally and was at Camp Crame to visit Trillanes.

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No. 4 in succession line met with No. 5 ahead of Friday rally

By Norman Bordadora

SPEAKER PROSPERO NOGRALES AND Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno discussed with concern the country's political situation hours before the most massive protest this year against the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo took place in Makati City on Friday.

Nograles said he and Puno tackled the political situation as two former Philippine presidents renewed calls for Ms Arroyo to resign, and civil society groups organized protests in the wake of the ZTE-NBN controversy controversy.

'Worth observing'

"We both jointly discussed the political situation and both jointly expressed concern about it as it affects our role as Filipino leaders today," Nograles said in a text message to the Inquirer.

"The current political noise is worth observing very closely as to what impact it will have on our nation's future. We are all concerned with that," he added.

Nograles expressed concern that the tension in political process would have some effect on the economy.

"There is so much political noise and this will create some economic backlash," Nograles said.

Courtesy call

He expressed doubt that those who are asking for Ms Arroyo's resignation would remain united in the long run.

"[They appear] united today, but know that they will again fight one another in the future, especially in 2010," he said.

Nograles met with Puno for breakfast at the Diamond Hotel in Manila on Friday. He, however, moved to dispel any speculation that could arise from their meeting as a time the political situation appeared volatile.

Nograles said his meeting with Puno was primarily a courtesy call on the head of the judiciary.

"It was nothing political or martial," Nograles said.

A declaration of martial law under the Constitution requires congressional approval.

'Not allowed'

Nograles said he and Puno also skipped any discussion about Executive Order No. 464 and its revocation as proposed by the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines.

"I can't take up with the Chief Justice matters that are pending or may be brought before the Supreme Court because that is not allowed among lawyers," Nograles said.

Nograles, nonetheless, has said that EO 464 may be done away with as the Supreme Court in its decision on executive privilege defined what may be covered by the privilege in congressional inquiries.

Malacañang is looking into whether it can cancel the EO.

Dodging invitations

EO 464 bars members of the executive branch from appearing in congressional inquiries without the consent of the President.

The EO has been used by government officials to dodge invitations by Congress to appear as in investigations.

Both Nograles and Puno, because of their posts in the government, are in the constitutional line of succession if the presidency becomes vacant. Nograles is fourth in line while Puno is fifth.

Nograles also said he and the Chief Justice discussed the needs of the judiciary in terms of budget support and legislation.

"[We also discussed] the state of the jails and court houses, especially in Mindanao where I come from, and the new judicial legislative executive development council," Nograles said.

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	(Batch 4)	Mar. 31 - May 18	May 30 - May 31
	(Batch 5)	Mar. 31 - May 19	May 30 - May 31
	(Batch 6)	Apr. 10 - May 19	May 30 - May 31
	(Batch 7)	Apr. 10 - May 19	May 30 - May 31
Manila (Tipolo)	(Batch 1) W-end	Mar. 07 - May 10	May 12 - May 18
	(Batch 2) W-days	Apr. 07 - May 11	May 12 - May 18
Baguio	W-days	Apr. 14 - May 14	May 12 - May 18
	W-end	Feb. 16 - May 08	May 12 - May 18
Dagupan	W-days	Apr. 14 - May 14	May 12 - May 18
	W-end	Feb. 23 - May 10	May 12 - May 18
Cebu	W-days	Apr. 14 - May 13	May 17 - May 21
	W-end	Feb. 23 - May 11	May 17 - May 21
Davao	W-days	Apr. 14 - May 13	May 17 - May 21
	W-end	Feb. 09 - May 11	May 17 - May 21
Bacolod	W-days	Apr. 07 - May 09	May 14 - May 20
Cabanatuan		Apr. 07 - May 09	May 14 - May 20
Cagayan-de Oro		APRIL 13 - May 12	May 13 - 29
Iloilo		APRIL 13 - May 14	May 12 - 28
Tacloban		APRIL 12 - May 12	May 14 - 28
Iloilo		APRIL 10 - May 13	May 13 - 28
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MARITIME REVIEW

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DECK	Nov. 08 -09, 2008	April 18, 2008

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Fishermen seek probe of alleged Spratlys deal

By Jerome Aning

MILITANT FISHERMEN ASKED THE SENATE on Saturday to investigate an alleged agreement between the Philippines and China that would allow Chinese companies to undertake offshore drilling within the country's exclusive economic zone, which is reserved for Filipino fishermen.

An official from the Department of Foreign Affairs was earlier reported to have raised questions about the deal signed by President Macapagal-Arroyo with the Chinese government for the joint exploration of Philippine-claimed territories in the disputed Spratlys group of islands which is believed to be rich in mineral and aquatic resources.

"This is against the country's national sovereignty and patrimony, and would deny the Filipino fishermen their exclusive fishing rights," said Bernardo Ilustre, chair of the Pambansang Lakas ng Kilusang Mamamalakaya ng Pilipinas.

Ilustre said the exploration and eventual offshore oil drilling would affect the fishing grounds in and near the Spratlys that are frequented by Filipino fishermen.

He cited the Japanese Fuel Exploration activities between Cebu and Negros Islands which have led to a leaner fish harvest and shrinking fishing grounds, which have affected the livelihood of Visayan fishermen.

Ilustre said the Spratlys' waters are a breeding and spawning ground for many species of fish that eventually find their way into the country's waters. The area is also a route of migratory marine animals such as tuna, whales and dolphins.

Bernadas asked the Senate to undertake a separate and thorough investigation into the alleged selling of the country's exclusive economic zone to China's different oil giants.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Sunday, March 2, 2008
4th Sunday of Lent

1st Reading: 1 S 16:1, 6-7, 10-13

In those days Yahweh asked Samuel, "How long will you be grieving over Saul whom I have rejected as king of Israel? Fill your horn with oil and be on your way; to Jesse the Bethlehemite for I have chosen my king from among his sons."

As they came, Samuel looked at Eliab the eldest and thought, "That must be Yahweh's anointed." But Yahweh told Samuel, "Do not judge by his looks or his stature for I have rejected him. Yahweh does not judge as man judges: human eyes see only the outer, Yahweh sees the heart."

Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel who said, "Yahweh has chosen none of these. Are all your sons here?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, tending the flock just now." Samuel told him, "Send for him and bring him to me; we shall not sit down to eat until he arrives." So Jesse sent for the youngest son and brought him to Samuel. He was a handsome lad with ruddy complexion, fine and beautiful eyes, and Yahweh spoke, "Up, anoint him for he is the one." Samuel then took the horn of oil and anointed him in his brothers' presence. From that day on Yahweh's Spirit took hold of David.

2nd Reading: Eph 5:8-14

Brothers and sisters, you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Be later as children of light, the fruits of light are kindness, justice and truth in every form.

You yourselves search out what pleases the Lord, and take no part in works of darkness; this law of no benefit; expose them instead. Indeed it is a shame even to speak of what those people do in secret, but as soon as it is exposed to the light, everything becomes clear. And what has become clear becomes light. Therefore it is said: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead that the light of Christ may shine on you."

Gospel: Jn 9:1-41 (or 1, 6-9, 13-17, 34-38)

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. He made paste with spittle and clay and rubbed it on the eyes of the blind man. Then he said, "Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam." (This name means sent.) So he went and washed and came back able to see.

His neighbors and all the people who used to see him begging, wondered. They said, "Isn't this the beggar who used to sit here?" Some said, "It's the man." Others said, "No, but he looks like him." But the man himself said, "I am the man."

The people brought the man who had been blind to the Pharisees. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesse made mud paste and opened his eyes. The Pharisees asked him again, "How did you recover your sight?" And he said, "He put paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said, "That man is not from God, for he breaks the sabbath"; but others wondered, "How can a sinner perform such miraculous signs?" Thus were divided and they questioned the blind man again, "What do you think of this man who opened your eyes?" And he answered, "He is a prophet."

They answered him, "You were born a sinner and now you teach us!" And they expelled him.

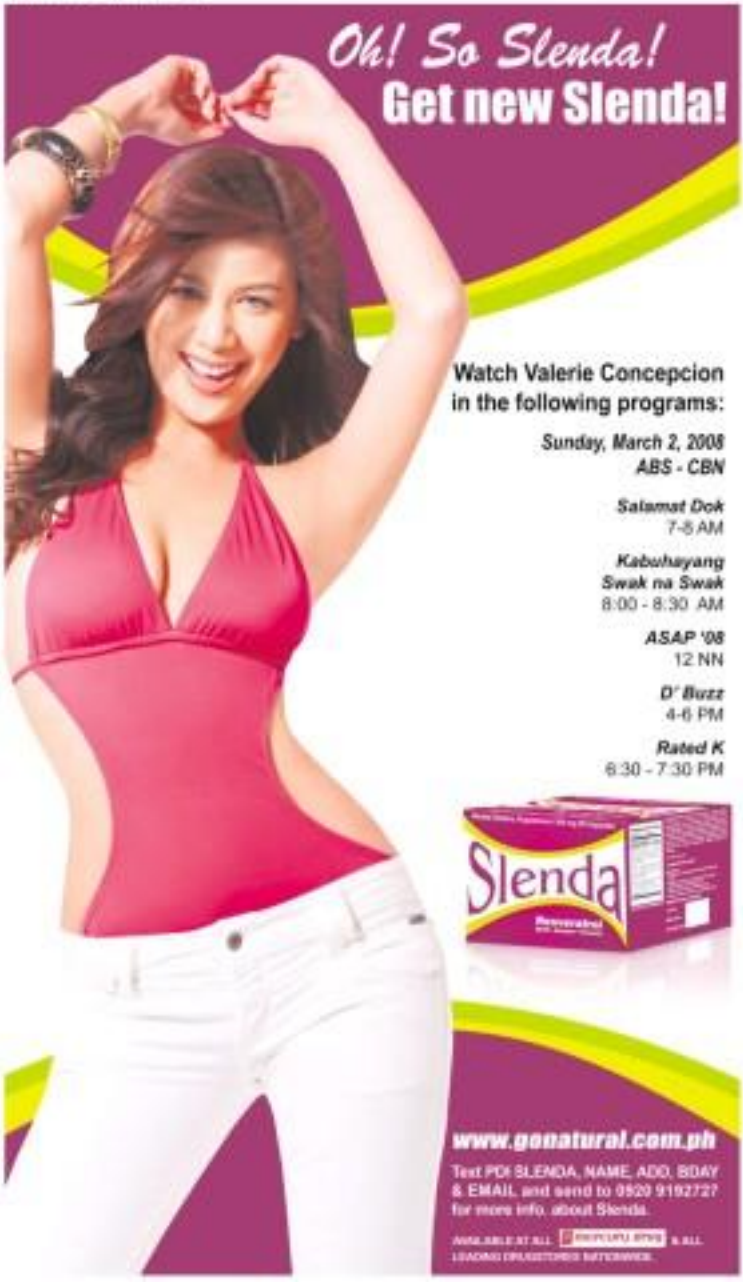
Jesus heard that they had expelled him. He found him and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "Who is he, that I may believe in him?" Jesus said, "You have seen him and he is speaking to you." He said, "Lord, I believe") and he worshiped him.

Commentary

Scripture tell us that seeing is a learned activity. The truth and vision in the eyes of a baby slowly adjust themselves to find the outside world is seen with increasing clarity.

The restoration of sight to the man born blind is a miracle of a high order. Jesus takes away the physical impediment to the man's sight, and also teaches him how to see.

This gift of sight is something for which we pray during the Lenten season. We pray for greater insight into the will of God, and for the ability to see more fully the needs of other people in our lives.



Protesters took it out on fun wall

GMA image on streamer bore brunt of Makati ralliers' anger

By Alcuin Papa

ANTIGLOVEMBERIST PROTESTERS found a new way to express their disgust with the present administration during last Friday's rally in Makati. They set up a "tokoyapo" wall and plastered it with faces of President Macapagal-Arroyo and her allies, much to the amusement of the demonstrators and bystanders.

"Tokoyapo" is an old Kapampangan cuss word used when a person is angry. A restaurant in Dronna, Tarlac, took the word to a new level when it set up a "tokoyapo" wall where customers can relieve their anger and stress by beating plates at the wall.

Instant hit

But the "tokoyapo" wall in last Friday's rally was actually just a serendipitous power tool to a flimsy bamboo fence. But to the angry protesters, it was good enough, and became an instant hit.

Dubbed "Traps Tokoyapo," the wall was set up by members of a militant group behind the rally stage.

At first protesters were hesitant to hurl anything at the "Traps Tokoyapo" wall and were content to gawk at the poster which featured a smiling President Arroyo prominently in the middle, and pictures of "traps," a slang connotation of the south traditional politicians" which also means "ugly."

Bottles, paper hurled

That was until one protester hurled an empty plastic water bottle at the poster, hitting the image of the President smack in the middle.

The first unused harp shows form the protesters. Then the fun began.

Taking the cue, other protesters started to hurl water bombs, crumpled paper and carton boxes, eliciting laughter and hearty cheers from the crowd.

Some of the bottles missed the target. Thankfully, no one standing behind the poster was hit.

Some protesters came up to the "wall" and started shaping and hitting the picture of the President.

One protester, obviously a fan of action star and former presidential candidate Fernando Poe Jr., imitated the actor's trademark rapid-fire punching style, complete with a double-slap as the ears of the "opponent." This also elicited cheers and laughter.

When the flimsy bamboo fence eventually collapsed because of the shoves, protesters let out another hairy cheer and started swamping on the poster.

Mood turned serious

"Bahay ko pa! (You're still alive!)," one male protester screamed as he put his face down on the image of Mr Arroyo.

The mood turned serious for a while when the militants spotted ZTE whistle blower Jun de Venecia III. "Scott Reid, Scottblad," the protesters chanted, to reference to the alleged involvement of Dr Terence Gaiter, former Speaker Jose de Venecia, to another controversial deal.

The poster's frame was eventually repaired and the "tokoyapo" fun started all over again.

Palace blames NBN probe for President's poor rating

By Michael Lim Ubac

MALACAÑANG HEIGHTS today blamed the ongoing Senate inquiry into the controversial ZTE-NBN deal for the high disapproval rating of President Macapagal-Arroyo's performance.

The latest Pulse Asia, Inc. survey results showed that three out of four Metro Manilans or 75 percent disapprove of the President's performance while 76 percent distrust her.

Deputy Presidential spokesperson Anthony Golez agreed that the survey results were affected by the unraveling political scandal brought about the testimonies to the Senate that the Wiz Couple allegedly received bribes from the Chinese ZTE Corp. deal was stranded the national broadband network project.

He said the survey indeed talked about the popularity of the President.

"But we know for a fact that the President has already made some unpopular decision but with a net beneficial effect that will improve the lives of majority of the Filipinos, particularly the poor," Golez said in a phone.

He cited the Social Fisheries Instituted by Erik Aurora, which included increasing by two-percentage points the value-added tax.

"The Filipinos may not realize the subdens behind those decisions now, but eventually these decisions will be instrumental to the irreversible economic growth of the country," said Golez.

The survey conducted from Feb. 21 to 24, covered 300 adults aged 18 and above in Metro Manila.

The same survey also found that virtually all Metro Manila residents (97 percent) were aware of the ZTE-NBN issue, with 81 percent stating they have heard of or read about the issue "many times over."

"With regards to the issue on ZTE affecting the survey, it is very important that the facts presented before the people through the media and the Senate should be balanced and complete," he said.

Golez said the problems with the ZTE deal was that versus of technical experts themselves were somehow not elaborated.

He said allegations of bribery was given focus to explain the draft in the actual scan of the project instead of the explanations of technical experts.

"They did not dwell on that, not in enough as the allegations bombed against the President. Much time was given to the allegations, not the actual problems. So they're missing out on the substance of the controversy, which is the NBN project."

Golez, however, conceded that the survey was meant "to make us work more harder on our side. Try to deliver more services to the people and hopefully people would realize that, yes, indeed the government is doing its job."

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An educational partnership of Foundation and IBM Philippines

P6-B UP-based IT park first of its kind in RP

From page A1

scientists at the forefront of their respective fields, who will have more interaction with university scientists," he said.

Eventually, Alonzo said, UP graduate students would join the research projects of the locators, say on software development, computer animation and graphics design.

"There is will also be promising employment opportunities for our new graduates," he said.

Exposure to industry

Ms. Carmela Ignacio, senior division manager of AGFA corporate business group, agreed with Alonzo.

"It offers us become a learning library for the academic. Students will be exposed to the industry ...through internship, and the faculty through consultancy," Ignacio said, adding:

"It's unique in that sense because there's collaboration between the students and the industry."

And that's on top of the business opportunities that the park will present for the city and the IT industry, Alonzo said, pointing out that the more presence of the multinational firms would "attract more innovations from IT service providers."

SMRC Electronic Data Networking Philippines Inc. will set up its regional BPO operations at the park. The others will be offering outsourced IT engagements from the Philippines, as well as software development, Alonzo said.

As it has been doing to the smaller UP South Science & Technology Park on C.P. Garcia Street, Ayala Foundation Inc. will run an "investment facility" for start-up IT companies in the park's R&T office.

The R&T building, to be called Techno Hotel, will house conference rooms, restaurants, cafés, specialty stores, convenience stores and banks, among others, that will cater to the locators' executives and staff, and UP faculty and students.

Also in the pipeline is the construction of low-rise residential buildings for the park employees and UP faculty and students, and a three-star hotel for businessmen.

There will be 10 office buildings for the locators, plus the SMC office. The construction of six buildings is in full swing.

Like a campus

Because its design evolved from 10% occupied to fully occupied, the IT park will become "like a campus," to which green spaces will be integrated wherever possible, Ignacio said.

"This will be a strolling development; there will be less massive buildings. So go with the look of the UP campus, there will be a lot of green and open spaces. There's a central park that is pedestrian-friendly," she said.

But the project has not escaped criticism from UP students and alumni who accuse the UP administration of commercializing the property, among others.

Both UP and ALI officials maintain that the agreement is mutually beneficial to both parties, and will not compromise the "integrity of its academic mission."

Alonzo explained that the restaurants, cafés, specialty stores, fitness centers and banks, as well as the hotel and residential buildings, would serve to support components for the locators.

"It's just natural for students to shop and consume," he said. "But if there are problems that will arise, we shall be ready with solutions and mitigating measures."

The IT park is only the first of a three-phase development plan of the UP administration. Some on the drawing board are plans to build biotechnology and education-energy systems parks on the sprawling property.

THE P6-BILLION UP North Science and Technology Park nears completion along Commonwealth Avenue in Quezon City. Developed by Ayala Land Inc., the IT park is expected to become a hub for IT and BPO (business process outsourcing) multinational companies. INQUIRER

Palace calm after the storm

From page A1

end off, taking a much-needed rest in the notebook of Malacañang after a tense Friday marked by unusual calls for her to step down.

An advisory issued by the Office of the Press Secretary early yesterday morning said Ms Arroyo had no official engagements during the weekend.

"No schedule this weekend. Pij (for press information)," said the ultimately in a text message sent to reporters some three hours after the last of the estimated 70,000 rowed in Makati dispersed peacefully.

Yesterday, the Malacañang complex itself was almost deserted, a far cry from Friday when 10 Cabinet secretaries, congressmen and other executive branch officials filled 13 Cabinet lit., the road leading to the main Palace gate.

Singular press release

With the Chief Executive taking the weekend off, the presidential news desk churned out a single-press release yesterday at 2 p.m.—but it had nothing to do with the political scene that just passed.

The press release cited the President's declaration March 30 a special nonworking day in Bukidnon, the hallwards of pro-administration Sen. Juan Miguel Zubiri, "to enable its residents to celebrate the 81st founding anniversary of their province with appropriate ceremonies."

Even Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita and Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye were apparently too exhausted to issue any official announcements on the events both early.

Although Malacañang insisted Friday that its peace "regular day," it was actually a security nightmare for police and state security forces who put up a virtual security shield at the Makati business district all the way to Malacañang in Mendiola, Manila.

Camp Crame

With the possibility that the anti-Arroyo interfaith rally could take on a life of its own and eventually threaten Ms Arroyo's hold on power, the President had chosen Camp Crame as her base.

Early in the night he herself hung morning business with a little pleasure, appearing in a short trip to the Luneta for the opening of the Manila Ocean Park and attending the inauguration of private and government facilities in Rizal.

But returning to Malacañang, the President dropped by Camp Crame for an unscheduled meeting with police and military officials and six members of the Cabinet's national security cluster. Around the time the Bible lesson, she monitored the Makati rally from a war room at the police headquarters.

The meeting included Defense Secretary Gilbert Teodoro, Interior Secretary Ronaldo Puno, Transportation and Communications Secretary Leandro Mendoza, Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane, Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo, Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez, Peso Secretary Ignacio Bunye, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Hermogenes Esperon Jr. and Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr.

The President left Camp Crame shortly before 7 p.m.—around the same time the protestors in Makati started to disperse...although the call by ended peacefully at about 9 p.m.

Warm applause

She proceeded to the Quezon Guest House where she was greeted with warm applause by 26 governors, 66 congressmen and 162 mayors, among other allies, who started arriving at 5 p.m. Many of them had by her aide, Committee Rep. Teodoro "Teddy" Arroyo.

Wine did not flow freely that night, said Ray Roquero, Lakas exec. vice director.

"We had a simple dinner and soft drinks while waiting for the President," he said.

When asked if administration allies were jubilant with the failure of the interfaith rally organizers to gather one million more bodies in prayer for the country's redemption, Roquero replied: "We're just here to show support for our President."

Different chords

In exclusive interview, Deputy Presidential Spokesperson Anthony Golez thanked those who joined the rally for their "cooperation" in maintaining order.

"The people in the rally were there for various reasons ... There were many voices singing in different chords. (Many) who joined (because it would) just be an interfaith prayer rally (and) were discouraged (when) politicians began to sing their usual invectives in the tail end of the program," he said.

Golez said that despite the rally, dubbed as the strongest opposition yet of Ms Arroyo's seven-year administration, she was "in high spirits" since the political noise failed to affect the implementation of the government's programs.

He said Estrada's presence had actually worked against the rally since many pinoys, both rich and students were home soon after the sunset. President went on stage and delivered a speech. (*Story see Page A2, 1*

"They saw that the supposed to embark rally had been watered by pro-Estrada elements," said Golez.

Lozada tells it like it is: Jedi, moderate ...

From page A1

2. Meeting for ex-Senator

Publicist Salvador "Bubby" Inocencio was abducted and murdered in November 2005. She chaired restaurant Cuchara and his driver, Emmanuel Corbito, were found in Cavite a few months later. Deposed President Joseph Estrada, Sen. Panfilo Lacson and the latter's trusted aide, Michael Ray Aquino, have been linked to the murder. The case remains unsolved.

3. Safe House by orig La Salle Green Hills

Lozada has sought refuge at La Salle Green Hills (LSGH), a school run by the Christian Brothers. Groups of nuns and priests have been accompanying Lozada in his public appearances, recalling the role that the Church played during the regimes Marcos years.

4. Negotiate rule/ yung dinawto nila sa media.

The day after Lozada was brought to LSGH, Senior Supt. Paul Alaan(also, one of those who had escorted him out of the airport), reportedly went to the school and asked Lozada to sign a typewritten request for police security which was meant to prove that Lozada had not been abducted by government men.

Lozada said Maranatha later recanted with another identity request letter for his arrest. Carmona, to sign in his testimony at the Senate. Lozada said Maranatha' second visit may have been an attempt to properly "secure" the story that the police would present to media: "Hindi po 'ata nagsabi sabi nung nauuna role ni media."

5. Refused to sign Maranatha letter

This is the term that Lozada used to explain to dare Commission on Elections chair Benjamin Abalos Sr. why a $130 million commission he him from the NBN project was not practicable. "Refused po ito ... siguro kahalati po personally." As will be two other jobs, half of the amount might be feasible).

Asked a Filipino for a bump or swelling, Lozada was trying to tell Abalos that a $130 million commission would be too big to go unnoticed.

6. Abalos/ their grand

The Senate Inquest advice was that National Economic and Development Authority director General Romulo Neri's supposed instruction to Lozada when the latter was asked to reconcile the two proposals for the NBN project, that of the ZTE Corp. group allegedly representing Abalos and of the Amsterdam Holdings group of Joey de Venecia, the son of then Speaker Jose de Venecia.

According to Lozada, a 26-percent overprice for a government contract would qualify as acceptable to make for corruption. Neri later explained that he was just using "colorful language" when he gave those instructions.

7. Loses agreement/ pursang na Hartridge

According to Lozada, the Chinese businessmen that Abalos had met with in January 2007 said they had been promised that the NBN project would be done on a loan basis just like the Hartridge.

The Hartridge, a rail project in retired the existing railway line in Manila southwards to Bulacan province, is being built with a loan from China. The first section of the railway line will extend from the old Tutuban station in Binondo to Meycauayan in Bulacan.

Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile has alleged that former Speaker Jose de Venecia uses the main lobbyist for the project rebuilt, he said, was exorbitantly priced at $565 million for a 32-kilometer railroad. He said the terms of the loan were skewed unfairly to China's favor.

8. Tapos pinagpawisan siya/ also. (what ng these sip mura. Business (quotes) pa also many joining 'yun.

Lozada said Abalos had angrily called him on Jan. 18, 2007, storming at him and threatening to kill him. Lozada said he got a quote of sweat that night. He said he decided to end his involvement with the NBN-ZTE project after this incident.

9. Also culpa

Lozada said two culps (Latin for through my fault) where him. Illinois DeMont Santiago confronted him with documents showing that the Philippine Forest Corp., which he then headed as president, loaned out a 50-hectare piece of land in Tanguio to a company that he controlled.

"There are certain things I did in my life that I have to change. But whatever impact I have for myself, I seem to keep it. I am afraid I might lose my soul, I admit to that, mea culpa," he said.

Santiago rattled off a list of contracts that Philforest entered into with Cabrini Medical Services, a company owned by Lozada's brother, that did not go through mandatory bidding. She also questioned Lozada's purchase of a Toyota Camry worth P2.3 million and a four-wheel-drive Toyota Hi-Lux reportedly for the use of Philforest.

Abalos revealed that Lozada bought for Philforest 31 imported goats for P700,000, which Lozada conceded was "expensive."

10. Permissible zone

After admitting to these questionable dealings, Lozada explained that there were various forms of corruption. He said corruption, the said kickbacks of 20 percent were the "norm" in government transactions.

Lozada said he told Abalos that a commission of $65 million for the latter in the NBN project would have been "acceptable." He said the $130 million commission that Abalos allegedly wanted was "too difficult to cover."

11. Jail

Lozada described himself as a Jedi, a member of a fictional order of noble knights in the "Star Wars" films.

"When I was grappling with my conscience, I chose to be a Jedi. I did not want to fall on the dark side," he said. The "dark side" is the evil force in the Star Wars universe.

12. Pwedeng umong (hindi)

The phrase, meaning "not Chinese," was what Lozada, who hails from the Ilocos region, used to describe himself. He was comparing himself to "a Te Sencio is that even if he doesn't work for a few years he can still feed his family," and "an Abalos who has Mesoblahmong as his kingdom."

13. Dysfunctional/ procurement system

According to Lozada, the aborted NBN project was a transactional manifestation of the dysfunctional government procurement system, meaning there is a "systemic dysfunction in how we procure projects."

He said the government's procurement system does not work because, institutionally, the process is supply-driven and not demand-driven. The means projects are how suppliers who are close to the powerful.

14. 20 percent commission is the norm.

At the Feb. 8 Senate hearing, Lozada said that a 20-percent overprice was the accepted norm in government contracts.

15. She is evil.

Lozada quoted Neri as saying this, referring to President Macapagal-Arroyo. Neri was supposed to have said this during a meeting last Dec. 7 at the Asian Institute of Management in Makati. The meeting was attended by opposition Senators Panfilo Lacson and Ana Consuelo Tandoy" Madrigal, among others. Neri was supposedly explaining how corruption happened in government and who benefit from it.

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16. It matters not like in change. But

Lozada said Neri used the phrase in the June Dec. 7 meeting, quoting the President as the center of this ecosystem of corruption. Lozada said this was the essence of Neri's "evil" reference to the President.

Lozada's testimony, which Neri did not want published, Neri told Lacson and Madrigal that "oligarchs" like the Pansios, the Aboitizes, the Ayalas and Sam Tan benefited from a corrupt government set-up, and that the military and the police protected that set-up.

17. Zubiri/ the money

This refers to some kind of fund, or "pantulak (money)" being put up for Neri's support as he would have to give up his government job since he decides to attend what he knows about the NBN-ZTE deal. According to Lozada, Sen. Gordon, after sounding out Jose the Senate, first had asked him to help in soliciting the "pantulak money."

18. I think I'm not defending the truth anymore. It's the truth that's defending me.

This was Lozada's parting shot in a feb. 16 television debate with a group of government functionaries, including Abalos.

Lozada was reacting to the suggestion he get from 92 percent of viewers who voted "yes" to the question: "Do you believe Lozada is telling the truth?"

The debate, titled "Harapan: The Jun Lozada Inquest" was aired by ABS-CBN.

Int'l rights advocates back RP journalists' fight

Vow bolder measures against 'culture of impunity' that kills newspersons

JOURNALISTS, LAWYERS AND human rights advocates have pledged to campaign for bolder measures to fight what they called the culture of impunity responsible for the rising number of unresolved killings in the line of duty.

The campaign was launched on Feb. 29 at the conclusion of a three-day international conference on "Impunity and Press Freedom" at The Peninsula Manila hotel in Makati City that gathered together legal experts and press freedom advocates from Asia, Europe, the United States and Latin America.

Similar struggles

Journalists, prosecutors, judges, human rights advocates and justices from Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina, Spain, the US, Indonesia and other countries in Southeast Asia shared their experiences in undertaking similar struggles to shed light on final solutions to the unsolved killing of "truth bearers" in the Philippines.

Supreme Court Chief Justice Reynato Puno called on conference participants to lend support "in defense of freedom of the press."

"We are the advocates, experts, journalists and jurists coming from all over the world who share the same concern over the rampant but many rights violations around us. I emphasize that it is 'we' who can do something because we can better effect change not in our individual stations but as a group working together," Puno said in his keynote address.

Culture of impunity

"It is the culture of impunity that encourages attacks on journalists. Unless and until we do something to minimize or, preferably, totally eradicate, these attacks will continue to limit our collective consciousness with corners of people who are bearers of truth," Puno said.

The Center for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), co-organizer of the conference, listed 71 journalists killed in the line of duty since democracy was restored in the Philippines in 1986. Of these, it said, 54 were killed under the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo, but noted that only 34 were "work-related."

The State of Press Freedom Report 2005 prepared by the CMFR disclosed that 96 percent of those killed had exposed government corruption.

Zero convictions

There had been few arrests and even convictions of the material masks behind the murders, the CMFR further noted.

"That's what impunity means," said Bobi Alampay, senior resource director of the Bangkok-based Southeast Asian Press Alliance (Seapa) which also organized the conference with support from the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) and the Open Society Institute (OSI).

"It is a problem that we all must solve if Philippine democracy is to survive," he said.

The Philippine campaign against the culture of impunity is linked to the CPJ's global campaign on impunity which is initially focused on Russia and the Philippines.

The CPJ describes Russia and the Philippines as "two very different countries that share two traits: they are among the world's deadliest nations for journalists, and they are among the worst in solving these murders."

Joel Simon, CPJ executive director, said both countries belonged to the top five in the list of countries worldwide headed by Iraq "where journalists" with Iraq in the lead with 125 work-related journalist deaths. The top five include Algeria with 60 deaths and Colombia, 46.

Work-related deaths

A CPJ research showed that murder was the leading cause of work-related deaths among journalists worldwide, accounting for 71 percent of the 479 deaths recorded between Jan. 1, 1992 and Jan. 31, 2006.

Simon noted that "justice is served in less than 31 percent of these murder cases."

In the murder cases, he said, only seven percent were considered as have led to the serving of full justice, meaning the masterminds and perpetrators were convicted of the crime; another seven percent led to partial justice, meaning only perpetrators were held accountable, and the rest considered to have fallen under the "complete impunity" category.

Simon said the research suggested that "the absence of justice promotes a higher incidence of murder." — Ryan B. Rosauro, Inquirer Mindanao

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Oil firms raise prices for first time this year

By Abigail L. Ho

OIL COMPANIES YESTERDAY RAISED THE pump prices of gasoline, diesel and kerosene prices by 50 centavos a liter, citing the increase in tariffs on oil imports and the rise in world oil prices.

Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. increased its prices at 12:01 a.m. yesterday, followed by Petron Corp., Chevron Philippines Inc. and Eastern Petroleum Corp. at 6 a.m. Total (Phils.) Corp. raised prices at 6 a.m. today.

The price hike was the first for gasoline, diesel and kerosene this year.

The tariff on imports of crude oil and finished products was raised to 2 percent effective yesterday from only 1 percent in February.

Higher end-February average

On the other hand, the regional benchmark Dubai crude averaged $60.26 a barrel at end-February, more than $2 higher than the January average of $57.37 a barrel.

As of Feb. 28, the price of unleaded gasoline based on the Mean of Platts Singapore (MOPS) benchmark for refined petroleum products stood to an average of $71.49 a barrel from $59.54 a barrel in January.

MOPS diesel diesel likewise surged to a Feb. 1-28 average of $112.37 a barrel from January's $107.91 a barrel.

Oil firms were able to cut the prices of gasoline and kerosene once and of diesel twice this year due to the lower tariff in February.

Tariff raised

With the international price oxygen points no longer enough to keep crude and finished product tariffs at 3 percent, the Department of Energy on Feb. 28 decided to raise the tariff to 2 percent effective March 1.

This, however, is still lower than the original tariff of 3 percent.

For the Dubai tariff, the DOE looked at Dubai crude and MOPS diesel prices in the first two weeks of February. Since these breached only the trigger points for the 2-percent tariff level, the 2-percent tariff was implemented in March.

Under the implementing guidelines on the tariff cuts, the tariff on crude and diesel would go down by 1 percentage point increments when certain Dubai crude and MOPS diesel price oxygen points are reached.

Mechanism 'worthlessness'

The oil price increase brought the price of premium unleaded gasoline to between P41.87 and P46.15 a liter, of diesel between P34.41 and P38.58 a liter and kerosene between P39.86 and P44.58 a liter.

The latest price hike immediately drew flak from militant groups.

The Bagong Alyansang Makabayan slammed the price increases, saying it exposed the "worthlessness" of the tariff mechanism.

The tariff mechanism was designed by the DOE to supposedly soften the impact of world oil price increases on local pump prices.

"It confirmed our suspicion that the diesel price reduction implemented during the start of the Energy Summit last month was only for publicity, to show that the government is responding to the people's plight," said Carolo Arandia of Bayan's public information department said.

12-percent VAT thing

Malilla noted that since the start of the year, there have been mounting calls for the lifting of the 12 percent value added tax (VAT) on oil products to lower their prices.

The government, however, rejected the proposal and instead came up with the cut-fit mechanism, wherein taxes on imported oil will be lowered based on corresponding prices in the global oil market to moderate local pump prices.

Bayan estimates that lifting the VAT on oil will automatically slash the price of diesel, kerosene, and gasoline by P4.5 per liter and that of liquefied petroleum gas by around P950 per tank.

Bayan also reiterated its call for Congress to repeal the Oil Deregulation Law. With a report from Jerome Aning

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FUNERAL PARLOR personnel retrieve the bodies of the flight instructor and his student pilot who died after their light plane plummeted to the ground in Plaridel, Bulacan.

Flight instructor, pupil killed in Bulacan light plane crash

PLARIDEL, BULACAN—A FILIPINO PILOT and his Indian flying student were killed yesterday when their light plane crashed into an irrigation canal[illegible] in this town's airport in Barangay Agnaya, police said.

Senior Insp. Victor Bernabe, deputy police chief of this town, identified those killed as Capt. Mike Bernardo and Kushal Mehata, 18, an Indian national. They were affiliated with Flightline Aviation School based in this town.

Bernabe said the victims' Cessna took off from the Plaridel airport at 10:40 a.m. but crashed five minutes later about a kilometer from the runway.

Rosemarie Cameros, 34, said she was washing clothes outside her house in Barangay Agnaya when she and her children saw smoke emitting from the plane before it crashed some seven meters from her house.

No one on the ground was reported hurt in the accident.

Officials of the Air Transportation Office in the town have yet to release an incident report, saying they were still investigating the crash.

In July last year, two Indians and a Filipino flying instructor were killed when their Cessna trafficked in mid-air and crashed onto a riverbed in Barangay Lipa, City of Malolos.

Both planes had taken off from the Plaridel airport and were bound for Metro Manila when they collided. Gerinda Reyes, Inquirer Central Luzon

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OFWs call for ouster of US troops from RP, Japan after alleged rape

By Jerome Aning

OVERSEAS FILIPINO WORKER groups in Hong Kong and the Middle East yesterday led their support to the Filipina woman allegedly raped by a United States serviceman in Japan last month, as they called for the pullout of US troops from both Japan and the Philippines.

Several Filipinos in Hong Kong and Migrante Middle East expressed their solidarity with Japanese citizens who want the US military bases removed from Japan.

The two groups said US forces supporting military exercises with Filipino troops in the Philippines should also be withdrawn from the country to prevent any occurrences of rape and other forms of abuse.

"The rape of a fellow Filipino-trained worker is a gesture of treason that deserves the condemnation of all overseas Filipinos. The rape of our women in countries where US troops are present and have a foothold is a part of the US rape of our country. We fully support the victims' search for justice for it is also our fight," Dolli Abad-Oshoven Balladares said in a statement.

"We strongly condemn in the strongest terms this atrocious act committed by US military servicemen who, after the crimes have been committed, run smugly and freely home. Japan with no paying the crimes," Migrante ME regional coordinator John Leonard Monterona said.

Both migrant worker leaders said they would hold the Americans and Japanese governments, as well as the Philippine government, accountable "if justice is denied our sister."

The Department of Foreign Affairs had earlier mobilized the Feb. 10 incident involving a US soldier stationed on Okinawa island in Japanese media to have reparation on the rape of Japanese women by American servicemen.

Monterona said the US presence in the Asia-Pacific region was principally meant to keep an eye on North Korea and Iran.

He said US Forces in the Philippines made the country a likely target of a North Korean attack if hostilities broke out.

Balladares, for her part, called the alleged rape incident a "tool" of President Macapagal-Arroyo's enormity in helping OFWs in need.

She demanded the government "immediately pursue justice" for the victim.

Leyte placed under state of calamity due to floods

By Joey A. Gabieta
Inquirer Visayas

TACLOBAN CITY—THE LEYTE provincial board has placed the entire province under a state of calamity in the wake of severe flooding that caused "enormous damage" to its towns and cities.

The flooding, spawned by relentless rains for almost two weeks in February, killed four persons in the province and damaged at least P200 million worth of crops and infrastructures.

"Leyte has suffered enormous damage due to the flooding. In fact, 24 of our towns (and) Tacloban suffered most because of this incident," Vice Gov. Mariano Baguilat said.

Baguilat, who presides over the provincial board, said the board's decision to place the province under a state of calamity was based on the recommendation of the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC).

The PDCC reported on Feb. 28 that the floods destroyed P35.77 million worth of agriculture, affecting 4,676 rice farmers, and caused damage to roads and bridges worth P466.36 million.

Baguilat said the PDCC recommended the state of calamity cover the entire province even if only 24 areas were severely affected by the flooding since the remaining towns and cities also sustained damage. Leyte has 40 towns and three cities—Baybay, Ormoc and Tacloban.

With the declaration of a state of calamity, Leyte could now request assistance from the national government, the vice governor said.

UP bucks 'generics only' proviso in meds bill

THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY OF THE University of the Philippines-Manila has registered its objections to the "generics only" provision of the Cheaper Medicines Bill pending before the bicameral conference committee of Congress.

UP-Manila is the host campus of the country's premiere college of medicine and other health-related institutions.

In a five-point position paper, the Chancellor's Advisory Council of UP-Manila said the controversial provision wherein doctors are required to write only the generic name of drugs in their prescriptions should be implemented only after a transitory period during which quality control measures should be put in place.

The bicameral committee is currently trying to reconcile the differences between Senate Bill No. 1958 (Affordable and Quality Medicine Bill) and House Bill No. 3044 (Cheaper Medicines Bill). The latter bill contains the controversial "generics only" provision.

"It is a crime to let the poor people buy drugs/medicines which may be of poor quality, and therefore ineffective. While there are existing ethical guidelines from pharmaceutical companies and professional organizations, there is a need for reforms in the professional conduct of all stakeholders for the rational use of medicines," the council said.

In its position paper, the UP-Manila council also stated that:

• Not all medicine formulations with the same generic name are the same. The doctor or dentist has to look at the drug's attributes, including the mg content or dosage of the active drug, the excipients, the physical attributes due to binders, coatings and additives.

• The doctors and dentists must choose the most appropriate medicines for their patients based on a combination of information, including the pharmacologic properties of medicines, drug literature from regulatory bodies, published clinical trials, actual clinical experience, palatability or acceptability and continuing medical education (CME) activities.

• Doctors and dentists have the moral and ethical responsibility to prescribe the best medicine that they know would treat the patient's disease, which may or may not be the cheapest medicine, regardless of whether it is branded or generic.

• Many generic drug formulations are of acceptable quality but there are formulations, both generic and branded, that are substandard, may contain impurities, or worse, may be fake.

• The Senate and House bills that aim to make medicines more accessible, affordable and of good quality should be buttressed, but the provision on "generics only prescription" should be implemented fully only when measures on quality control are in place.

This, the council said, may require a transitory period longer than one year.

"The academic community of the University of the Philippines-Manila is offering its expertise and facilities ... in the legislation and implementation of laws that will promote better accessibility and affordability of quality medicines for all Filipinos," it said.

Firm ordered to forfeit P4m in ore

THE DEPARTMENT of Environment and Natural Resources on Friday ordered the forfeiture in favor of the government of P4 million worth of nickel ore excavated by a small mining firm in Cantilan for violating the mining law.

According to Environment Secretary Lito Atienza, Al Una Corp. illegally extracted about 200,000 metric tons of nickel ore contrary to the provisions of the small-scale mining permit under which it was operating.

Small-scale mining firms are allowed to extract no more than 50,000 metric tons of nickel ore annually. The law also provides that the mining activities rely heavily on manual labor.

But Atienza noted that the 200,000 metric tons of ore ready for sale during an inspection of the firm's private port yesterday strongly indicated over-extraction.

He described owning "unreasonable" of minerals awaiting shipment.

"It is very evident that heavy equipment and trucks were used, it is clear that Al Una violated the conditions of its mining permit," Atienza said.

When asked to produce the permit documents for the shipment, Al Una failed to comply.

Atienza also said that the firm had exported 65,000 metric tons of the mineral in January. Jocelyn B. Uy

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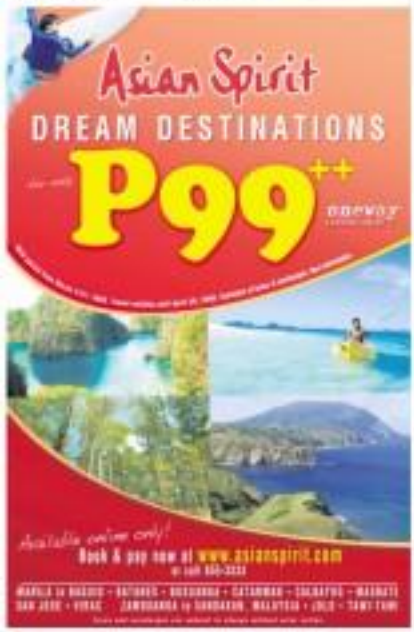

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

A throne of bayonets

EDITORIAL

ON FRIDAY THE YOUTH PROVED THE SKEPTICS wrong and, once and for all, belied pronouncements that what reigns among them is apathy. They were in Makati driven by the thirst for institutional reforms; some called for more radical changes. They may have been there with varying calls, but all of them—from the most conservative schools to the most liberal—were united by the firm determination to make a stand. The best that the administration's apologists could do is belittle the youth's presence was to call them deluded—the standard criticism leveled by frightened elders when confronted by idealism.

The youth are the new factor in the political equation, the unexpected and unpredicted, though long sought-after, shift in the balance of forces. In all the organizational meetings leading up to last Friday's Makati rally, it was the youth who resisted the idea of politicians hogging the stage, though they found themselves "resisted" as well.

On the day of the rally, Ernesto Maceda who, by the standard of his youthful days, couldn't have been more different from the youth gathered in Makati—history records Arsenio Lacson's verdict on him: "too young, and so corrupt"—thundered against the Catholic Education Association of the Philippines, the La Salle students, Youth Act Now and sympathetic groups that trained the mayo efforts to grab the limelight.

Who are these people, he sneered, when we, the traditional politicians can muster 20,000 at a drop of the hat? And he even dared the critics of his kind of politics to do their own thing.

It was a good thing he made that brave. Maceda's prehistoric challenge is one that young people, everywhere, should take to heart. We hope they will call the mayo's bluff. The students have every right to respond, "so old, and still so..."

As the school year ends, the youth must now decide: Will they go on vacation and abandon their cause, or keep it up and take it to their neighborhoods?

When Jejomar Binay unexpectedly summoned Cory Aquino and Joseph Estrada to the stage, the students joyfully applauded Cory and grimaced at the sight of Estrada, whose presence, after all, had been made possible by his pardon from President Macapagal-Arroyo. The youth held firm; they stayed. Their cause was larger than any old leader there.

The reaction of the administration that Friday was the most revealing. The days leading up to it saw streamers sprouting up around the metropolis, bearing government slogans; and an attempt at a pro-government rally in the Mendiola Bridge. As her own Dasmariñas 108 congressmen at a Mass in the Palace, and as governors and mayors spent the day going through a loyalty check, the President ultimately decided to plant herself in Camp Crame. Never mind that the Palace had already been securely barricaded with containers blocking all roads leading to it: this was obviously not enough. Just as 5,000 policemen and three battalions of soldiers seem to be not enough to give her peace of mind.

In the end, an unprecedented declaration of a curfew zone over Makati City was made, so that the cameras could only have to the red flags and not film the Seresenes, the Assumption students, the Theresianists and all the other youth who clogged the streets to demand both action and reforms.

And the sampling of speeches made at the rally, to find out if anyone contained sedition, once more reminds us of how the legal system of this country has been transformed from an arm of justice into an instrument of harassment and persecution.

The President is cultivating the youth. We believe the majority of them are Makati were institutional reforms; they are petitioning her to redeem herself.

Her answer, to date, continues to be war to force to surrender. She hasn't lifted Executive Order 464. And there are reports that new regulations are being drafted at the National Economic and Development Authority to restrict access to information, specifically to block media access to the agency's documents. The regulations are meant to serve the purpose and perpetuate the effect of EO 464 and Memorandum Circular 108, should the President revoke her existing policy.

Like Nixon, a criminal president, the administration insists it is supported by a "silent majority." But we saw on Friday that what props up her throne are the bayonets she commands.

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The Armed Forces of the President

SEPARATE OPINION

Raquenel A. Cruz

FOR WHOM AZO, I DISCERNED FREEDOM of expression as the brightest gem in the crown of liberty. I say it again with the same conviction but with much disappointment and resentment this time over an ordinance.

This was demonstrated last Friday when hundreds of Filipinos gathered in Makati to criticize the Arroyo government for its corruption and its cover-up with transparent lies.

The "instrument and the guarantee and the bright—indestructible forces of democracy" to the eloquent words of Witold Philips, was given much recognition by the administration as the prime object of the many hostility against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, her Cabinet, and the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

The pronouncements of the various members are understandable because they are the alter ego of President Arroyo under the Constitution. When they lie, it is in effect the Arroyo who is lying or (crime) her dubious aide as the chief executive of the land.

Moreover, the flunkies in Malacañang are anxious over their own personal welfare. Once their base is cut as clothed and distrusted by the people, her cabal of apologists will also be cut of their privileged positions and their lucrative illegal perquisites.

But I reserve my special condemnation for the soldiers and policemen around the embattled President. Under the Constitution, they are required to be "the protector of the people and the State." Given the circumstances, they are required to be "the protector of the people" and the State, not of the President, and perhaps not even the true President.

The ZTE scenario is only the latest, if so far the most horrendous, of her offenses. She lie-detector concocted after its initial success (out of honest or criminal or tolerant lies it is still a maladroitness as ever. This was the real reason for the massive demonstration in Makati last Friday that saw the Filipino people peacefully articulating their just grievances.

Freedom of expression is the most powerful weapon of the people in asserting and defending their rights against the government. Said Hugo is another guarantee but it is not as effective in this country because of its ambiguous. Moreover, it is not directly available to the ordinary people to those unsentimentally qualified.

But the right to speak may be exercised by all the people—the young as well as the old, rich or poor, peasant or jeep, urbanite or gay, religious or atheist, teachers or students, businessmen or economists, even killers and grafters and soldiers loyal to the State or only to Mr Arroyo.

And this right promises other liberties which are pure and passed of freedom of expression. Among these is the right to peaceful assembly, which the School Patrons of the President insulted with sham servility last Friday that they exhibited through the barrel of the gun.

The media exposed the thousands of outraged citizens who answered the summons going to Makati to manifest their outrage against Mr Arroyo and her gang of liars. But there were equally indignant citizens who could not do so because they were not allowed by the hypocrites in Malacañang.

They protest to the gross gathering of Malacañang citizens in Makati were blocked by the soldiers and policemen under the orders of their commander in chief. Thousands of Filipinos who wanted to join the angry protesters were barred by the female Peters for shallow and stupid excuses.

The people were merely intending to add their voices to the indignant outcry against Mr Arroyo, her husband and their children, their henchmen in the Cabinet, the court who abandoned Rodolfo Lozada and demanded his life, Mike Defensor who gave him P10,000 and Manuel Cano who turned him P500,000 supposedly from their own pockets and not of the generations of their bleeding hearts.

But the people were denied this constitutional right by the AFP Filipinos who could not validate their identification cards were denied free passage. In another story point, the road was blocked by a big van that the soldiers said could not be moved because of engine trouble.

Thousands of citizens who had come from the provinces to enroll the rally in Makati were denied entry because they were not for Evangelista Mojica. Meanwhile, her Judas dramatizers enjoyed all the comforts of their security gathering, including the lies they received or were promised for their feigned admission of their tarnished idol.

The pretended impotency of the Armed Forces was dismissed and futile when their patron-in-laughingly marched into its ranks the PMC station in a childish demonstration of their loyalty to Madame Commander in Chief. There was nothing more believing than that spectacle of tanned men playing like iron soldiers, which they were not but they designed to hide their specters.

By violating the right of the citizens from the provinces to join the rally at Makati, the Armed Forces of the Philippines diminished the importance of the massive volunteer they mustered during this rally. Their arrogance at the sorry pretense Makati last Friday disgracefully revealed their true nature as the oppressor and not the protector of the people and the Constitution.

Cross over to the light

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SVD

THE STORY IS TOLD ABOUT A BURGLAR who broke into a house one night. Unknown to him, it was the home of a notorious, corrupt government official. At last would have to, she was met right when in the dark corridor and shot both. Now in their tracks. When the armed burglar recognized the official he was seen shouting, "Pare! Pare!"

* * *

In today's Gospel (Jn. 9, 1-41), Jesus opened the eyes of a man who had been blind since birth. Jesus then made use in the short Himself as the "Light of the World." During those days of darkness, confusion and division in our country, may we all recognize and see the light and the Light Him well as we humbly pray: "Open our eyes, Lord!"

* * *

Moms how children on a trip keep asking the question, "Are we there yet?" It is a simple, spontaneous question, but it is a very deep question we adults should raise especially during these times of searching. With all the events unfolding around us, if we are not even asking this question, then we are blind and out of touch with the realities of the here and now. It is troubling how some people do not even care, or simply forbear the hassle between light and darkness. The battle is real. Which side are you on? At the very least, make a stand.

* * *

The questions "Are we there yet?" carries with it three components. The first component is "no," which involves commitment. The second component is "there," which involves movement and direction. And the third component is "yet" which involves a timetable. I am for the light, and my prayer is that we go to the light, now, and that we all see the light, soon!

* * *

The blind man received his sight because he allowed himself to be healed. In other words, he listened and obeyed Jesus. He see will while many remained dim and blind in his eyes, and he went on much in the pool of Siloam as Jesus had ordered him. Whatever decisions we make in life and whatever stand we take on the pressing issues that confront us, let us make sure that these are borne out of prayer and discernment, and are as it that they are done in obedience to God's will. Beyond personal affiliations, party ideology and religion let God's voice and God's will be the source and solution of all our anxiety. And if I may add to what Rodolfo "Jun" Lozada said, let us do whatever we do "out of love" for our country, not out of hatred or selfishness.

* * *

Someone said it beautifully: "Freedom power is in flower." One very good fruit of all the praying we all are going through as a nation right now is the involvement of the youth and the students. They are coming out from their comfortable world of reality, computers and gimmicks, and going to the streets to be counted. Yes, they are showing us adults that they have substance, and that they do matter.

* * *

Another event of our century that is coming over from the comfort zone to the light is the middle class composed mostly of professionals and businessmen. One can understand the outrage of people who, with the simple dictates of citizenship, have children or nothing a home and a car in their lifetime, do a lot of sacrifice and lessen hard work and their hear of people in government and the powers that be raising

to easy money in the amounts of millions and even billions!

* * *

The overseas Filipino workers are also crossing over to the light. These are the people who sacrifice so much for the sake of family and country, and their shortchanged by the government which calls them "heroes" but in reality treats them as "mandarins and machine-bes."

* * *

And so it is that light will prevail over darkness. It has happened, it is happening, it will happen. As the light prevails, those in the darkness will be exposed. Some will manipulate further into the darkness, and some will cross over to the light.

"Are we there yet?" Yes, we are not there yet, but we are getting there. Let us all make a choice, now, for at no only point: "Lord, help us to see the light." Let us also all pray: "Lord, help us to show the light." Amen.

* * *

Words of wisdom from the Most Lopez, who celebrated her 80th birthday recently: "Simplify your life, and stay rooted in God." How true. Those who complicate their lives, their relationships do not have peace. Think of people who live with lies. How complicated and dark their lives are! Those who are not rooted in God will either soon or hard wind and temptation come. Stay simple, and stay rooted in God, and you'll have peace.

* * *

Through it all, may we see the signs of the big picture. "Thy will shall [rule]!" Yes, but let it not just pass you by. Let small make a conscious effort to cross over to the light, and to spread the light. Yes, let there be light. We have that blessed

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, help me to see the light, and help me not to blink, but to reflect You, The Way, The Truth, The Life, and The Light. Amen.

Rage for truth

WITH DUE RESPECT

Artemio V. Panganiban

THE PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE IN THE SERIOUS governance is deteriorating fully in the corruption scandals bounding to confess in bunker and poverty the President Macapagal-Arroyo's credibility has risen more to plunge, even until meaningful terms are concerned to media ago seemed to give her some chance to good governance as now getting persistent about her widespread.

Unlikely possibilities. What are the steps of confronting or solving this has deteriorating notorious? The "best dictionaries" to voluntary resignation or demanded by Cory Aquino. But GMA has rejected this option outright: "I am the President and no one else," she declared after hearing those in the Malacañang last Feb. 25.

A second way is a snap election, which President Marcos chose in 1986. But there is no vacancy in the presidency. Furthermore, a law is needed to authorize a special election. Besides, the Constitution allows only two grounds, permanent disability, removal from office, or resignation of the President, the Vice President shall become President to serve the unexpired term." In 1986, there was no incumbent vice president.

A third option is impeachment a la Joseph Estrada. But impeachment is a lengthy process in the House of Representatives. After witnessing how easily the Estrada Party had defended Jose-in Estrada, there seems no hope of an impeachment case passing the bigger house. A fourth possibility is a military takeover. But Gen. Fidel Ramos and a few like-type junta would be far worse than GMA. It will obliterate the Constitution, our democracy, our economy and everything our heroes and martyrs have fought for over the last 100 years.

Martial law under the present Constitution is unthinkable. But a fifth option of serving under the Constitution and declaring emergency rule would make GMA a dictator, something our people will fight tooth and nail. GMA I think is almost enough not to want to be remembered in the annals of history as a dictator like Marcos, or Hitler.

How about people power? Our country may not be ripe for an Edsa-type peaceful revolution. The economy is still holding up, unlike in 1986 and 2001 when the peso was sinking, prices soaring, business downsizing and investments migrating. Too, former Cardinal Sin is no longer around to summon a million masses of faith-a million strong. Moreover, the military is very loyal to GMA. People power would "weaken our democratic institutions," said Archbishop Leonardo Legaspi. Neither did the bishops call for resignation, only for moral to corruption.

GMA's best option, GMA's one saner politicians who carefully weighs all her options, like most to worry that all the above scenarios are impossible. She must also know she has two very important assets: (1) the economy is still holding up and (2) the opposition is still not yet stronger to successfully oust her. Her popularity ratings, though low, are still not zero-level. Her term is not yet over. There are many people in good will, who are still willing to work provided there is credible assurance she would really step down in two years, and provided she shares the corruption-busting load.

I think that, from GMA's perspective, the best way she can honorably survive this grave crisis of confidence is by convincing the middle forces that she would really relinquish power in June 2010, and only those forces. She has proposed to allow the Commission, regardless of persons and method, always works with suspicion that it is to interfere in or prolong her stay.

Second, safeguards that credibility of the Commission on elections by filling up the two existing vacancies with independent and competent nonpoliticians. In the same way, name a no-nonsense head of the Commission on Audit who will see to it how hanky-panky in the disbursements of the people's money. Also, appoint trustworthy persons to the Ombudsman, starting with the firing of just-retired Angelina Sandoval Gutierrez.

Third, prosecute immediately and send to jail some big names involved in the NBN-ZTE deal and other cash-up-front transactions. Be transparent. Make sure Senator are remembered in quite into these transactions. Cooperate with independent offices to flurries on the attack.

Fourth, take preventive measures to minimize the impact of the receding US economy on our country. Domestically, may 't just quickly remember her about our interests of our overseas Filipino workers, the backbone of our economy, who are still awaiting her definitive action on their five recommendations reported in my column last Feb. 18.)

Undertaking in good faith all these steps would result in even-win solution for her and our people. She might yet save her presidency while satisfying the clamor to clean corruption and reform governance.

Conclusion: Be bold. In the meantime, what should she cohere do? I say, urge on! Rage for truth! Press on with the drives. Make them more massive, intensify the media blitz. Sharpen the focus on corruption. Ensure the Supreme Court's decision that, I believe, would unleash the forces for truth and justice. They will not disappoint her and panic. They will not bishops, priest and nuns until "communal action" shall lead us to a new type of people power that would thrown us from corruption and crown integrity.

Surely, when the people succeed preserving the historic democratic, few would have anticipated that those heady days would eventually lead to a peaceful change in the presidency a triumph of truth and a victory for democracy. Divided separate, unite to rise again!

• • •

Comments are welcome at abpanganiban@gmail.com

The Center cannot hold

ALL TYPE THE, THERE ARE OTHERS WHO SHUN THEIR own institution, compelled by choice and conscience and circumstance to play away on battlefields across the country. Every four minutes a year every Student across cyberspace, Lenala, ZTE, indignation in its varying forms, pleas for caution, rant to action, justifications for inaction, the long narrative of disillusionments wounded by the angst and frustrated.

I can't pretend to represent my generation. All of us are beset with a choice, and the fact of my words does not mean that we choose. In fact those made by my contemporaries had yet there is something very wrong with UKO president Jose Archbishop hinged Magdalena's choice of career path: "I don't want to be very satisfied about what is going on in their lives." I cannot believe that anyone would be satisfied with this sort of life, with the rape of the Filipino nation occurring with daily regularity, and the other material for echoing from the gates of the Palace. Satisfied? I doubt it! more pertinent as an indigestion reality to the Filipino people, and more pertinent as an indigestion reality to people scrambling for a meal a day in this country do not go to million strikes, and yet I would hesitate to call them satisfied.

Remember, an article in young Bread commented all those who stopped to indigestion rather as inevitably "blind and selfish cowards," who were either "interpolated idealists" or "hypocrites to the hour." And while the writer spoke with righteous rage, he accused those "misguided idealists" of believing they have a monopoly on righteousness. When I find more astounding than his hasty generalizations on the motivations of all who protest the current corruption is his argument that all this rage against Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo is a waste of time, money and energy as if the billions in public funds lost to corruption is not a waste, as if corruption has not deprived people of the knowledge and education the welfare services, the shelter. I resent his choice to use my money. Not perhaps it would be how this has so understood why others choose to go.

Many have said that all the cynical, all the rallies, all the demands of people who have crowded in Ayala last Friday can do little more than derail traffic. Perhaps they are right. But I will take the risk that they are wrong. I will take the risk that a wrong, appallingly, incredibly, brutally wrong, no allow those in power to believe they have the right to rearrange my future because they are with enough to close their way to power. To be silent is to tell every future Filipino leader that there is no limit to what they can do.

Everyone is dirty in government, a pro-GMA relative told me. And perhaps that is true, but it is no reason to condone corruption and rank dishonesty when we see it, especially when it implicates the country's chief executive.

And this is where I'll tell you where I stand. I do not wish to see Arroyo, although I support calls for her resignation or she exercise by impeachment. I wish I could say that I believe in the rule of law and not theirs. But rules in the Philippines where the rule of law is applied selectively, in very strange ways. Some of the rules are bent, others are broken. Some of them do not prosecute, if the Ombudsman sits on the case? And so it's no excuse for me, because I see no other way to say so.

Once upon a time, the voice of a white-haired dragon thundered from the Senate session hall, raging that a nation cannot be ruled by a thief. It was a voice that galvanized a marching country into the streets, and reminded people of what they deserved. Now the dragon is a senator, and Joker he's not behind a microphone and helps along the cacophony under of dozens. I believe the administration has lost all moral authority to govern. I believe in its total accountability, and I will go out and talk to add one pair of feet to the thousands who wear the mask.

I'll tell you about a friend of mine. His flip flops and jeans have been traded in for slacks and button-downs, there is a ring on his finger and a giggling, laughing caregiver-child have replaced the rebel without a cause in his arms. he entertains his family's weekly spending; he has worked nights in call centers before clawing his way up the corporate ladder. He believes, very firmly, in the rule of law, and the limits of his non-made him even more determined to see it uphold in every corner of our country. And yes, he says, while a small hand curled around his sleeve, that he is slowly believing that the way out is the way of the street. As entire stomach knowing that the taxes the government bleeds from his paycheck, money that can be spent on feeding up his small boy is being wasted into the pockets of the undeserving.

Days since worse of what he thought was the inevitable end of humanity, where "the best lack all conviction, and the worst are full of passionate intensity."

I am not very certain where all this is going. All I know is that as much has gone wrong, and has gone on long enough.

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Re comments e-mail rebel.inquirer@gmail.com

REBEL WITHOUT A CLUE

Patricio Ernesto Lanot

'Small' money, big intentions

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

IN HIS TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE ON the NBN-ZTE deal, Rodolfo "Boy" Lozada said that the entire scandal is all about the "dysfunctional procurement system" of government. Under this system, development projects are handed to loans from private or public sources, or aid from foreign governments, are torn out of the country's hands to suit the donor' preferences and practices. Of course, are dictated up by the "creative" minds of the bureaucrats and politicians, are done to the powerful to get together deals and projects while demanding hefty commissions.

What's sadly scandalous is that it's the Filipino people who end up paying for these scandalous deals, for projects that are not what they really need—or are of low priority—and for the immoral profits of inside deals and influence-peddlers.

But not all development projects are subject to wheeling and dealing, hastily because the procurement system is not always corrupt, or because the attention of power brokers and "movers" is on political issue. Small grants projects, usually for endeavors in the local level, are pending so far low development interventions, but some implement the kinds of projects that are most needed, and make a big difference. Mary Racelis, for instance, began as small pilot projects for small groups of poor community women, and their unsophisticated success led to replication around the country with home-centric programs focusing on such various issues and promotion as a national policy.

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TERESA Ann is a consultant, aligned by representatives of foreign embassies and agencies in the Philippines, whose job is to "identify and recognize the worthiness of its members for better collaboration in and comprehensive action of their work."

The Small Grants Donors Group (SDG) is an informal gathering which meets every month, sometimes hosting dinner, among the different embassies and agencies, "to share information, updates and assists in the development environment." The SDG first began meeting in 2002 mainly because the members "felt they did not have a significant impact on the country's development," and because they were "not getting enough information" about the various projects being undertaken by the different embassies.

Today, the group has been cooperating among themselves to "leverage more, for maximum impact." After discussions and several revisions, the members was signed last year by representatives of the head of MOOE the country's international aid associations. The signatories include the ambassadors of Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and Norway Noble, resident representative of the UNDP.

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AMONG THE resolutions contained in the memorandum was a second "duplication of efforts," as well as a determination to improve the quality of the grant. The group also resolved to "capitalize on unique and innovative approaches that our programmes allow to develop such as community-based approaches", as well as to "support and not duplicate existing government like Philippines' development efforts."

Of the last, it does seem an irony at times that many development projects, especially those of a large scale, such as the NBN-ZTE deal, end up defeating their purpose. Instead of helping the beneficiary country, the majority of its money is poured to open an expensive commitment from the donor country, as well as on equipment from suppliers identified by the donors. In contrast to funding an entire large project, small grants are usually limited to the project itself, and "internal" commissions are thrown into the mix, the projects can even result in the introduction of progressive methods, if not in technologies.

THE SMALL GRANTS donors also resolved to share "information on ongoing activities and programming as much as possible on a regular and systematic basis, sharing of management tools, and joint identification, feasibility monitoring and evaluation missions."

Above he explored are the sharing of forms and formats, joint auditing exercises, and participation in advisory and decision-making bodies. The group members also agreed on the possibility of "joint or co-financing arrangements," including joint funding, as well as "delegated management arrangements."

The statement says the members will report to the larger donor community on their three tracks: their results in the country they coordinate in, their views on aid improvement opportunities.

What does this mean for Filipinos? As stories, I would think this benefits us because the evaluation of projects for funding will undoubtedly be more careful, better informed, and within reasonable budgets and accountability mechanisms. And with transparency enforced among donors, don't hope this will be matched by transparency on the part of local partners as well.

Putin's unwilling executioner

WORLD VIEW

Nina L. Khrushcheva

MOSCOW—THE QUESTION THAT ASK DEMOcratic Russian politics, and world dominator of Russian politics—"will he relinquish Putin's or won't he stay in power?"—has now been settled. He will and he won't.

The election of Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, as Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin's presidential successor, Dmitry Medvedev, as Russia's president means that Putin is formally not running for president and prosecutors of executive power. But now it looks like 21-gun salutes and blue plates in personal lines are the only things that Putin is giving up—if that. In opting to become President Medvedev's prime minister, Putin has ensured that he will remain in the thicker of power because he will remain minister-by-minister control of the government.

The bizarre transfer of office but not power—perhaps college improvement on the precedent of state governors in the American south who used to hand their offices to their wives when their term limits expired—is Putin's scenario. But what if it is not Medvedev's? What if Medvedev, after a few years, becomes as independent of his patron as Putin became of Boris Yeltsin, the man who chose him as his successor? Should that happen (no is to be sure, it will be useful to know what, if anything, Medvedev stands for.

One thing immediately stands out about Medvedev: he was only military one in the cabinet, the only FSB (or military) man not in the cabinet of the Putin era. As a liberal lawyer, he should in principle understand the importance of the rule of law. And, as deputy prime minister since 2005, he oversaw the Russian National Priority Projects (a set of policies to develop social welfare), which has given him experience insight into how to get things done any of the chaotic, why their focus on getting accommodating personal power could end him.

Medvedev's promises to modernize the feudal institutions of Russia's army also are true again. Most favorably, as the head of Putin's presidential administration, Medvedev directly oversaw the implementation of today's disastrous version of Russian governance. In a way only appropriate that he should become deputy prime minister for social affairs in 2005, because he had already succeeded in largely bringing those affairs to a halt.

Russia is supposed to be a tsarocracy, but it rarely operates as one. Instead, it is a country of competition, most analysts were certain that Putin would find a way to stay in power even without amending the constitution, and so he did.

Indeed, Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov's pen name Lenin, the revolutionary ideologue Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevism editorial ended with Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev's stagnation, Boris Nikolaevich Yeltsin's personal mess during the Nineties era, "We were all for the better, but it turned out to be the worst."

But, as predictable as Russia's undemocratic system of governance usually is, the country does defy expectations once in a while. Medvedev could surprise us all. Indeed, Mikhail Gorbachev was originally installed in power to prop up with Yuri Andropov's KGB-inspired vision of communism, but instead directed the Soviet Union's course into glasnost and perestroika, and ended his own political career.

Will Medvedev do the same? Probably not. But it is wrong to say that he will behave like Putin's puppet prime minister since 2008, let us say, the Russian National Priority Projects to set of policies to develop social welfare), which has given him experience insight into how to get things done any of the chaotic, why their focus on getting accommodating personal power could end him.

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TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to: jamesreyes@inquirer.com.ph

Edna Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

Tribe, farmers guard against biopiracy

A NUMBER OF PHILIPPINE BIODIVERSITY AND GENETIC RESOURCES HAVE BEEN LOST TO foreign patenting without the corresponding benefit sharing for the country," Adriano S. Crisólogo Jr., director general of the Intellectual Property Office of the Philippines, said recently.

Crisólogo said the country was losing billions in potential income from illegal bioprospectors and biopirates of biodiversity and genetic resources.

No wonder a tribe in Mindanao and a farmers' community in Bohol are taking measures to protect their biological resources.

The Talaandig of Bukidnon are replacing a practice for outsiders who want to enter their territory. Visitors must, among others, state their purpose, and if given the go signal, perform a permission ritual and abide by the rules of the tribe.

The Talaandig are among the indigenous groups in the country that are asserting their right to free and informed consent before any undertaking is done in their communities.

In Bilar, Bohol, a farmers' community has come up with a registry to prevent its traditional rice seeds from being appropriated by other groups. Farmers of Barangay Canapnapan have listed the names, kinds and basic characteristics of the rice varieties that they use, and have set up a seed bank and exchange inventory under their guidance.

They maintain that rice varieties in their community must remain freely accessible to farmers.

The success of the Bilar farmers has encouraged other communities in the country to adopt their community registry.—*GJC*

By Maurice Malanes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

AS INTERNATIONAL and national laws and policies on the protection of genetic resources are still being debated, some Philippine indigenous and farming communities have taken measures to protect what resources is left of their biological resources and traditional crops.

One farming community is the Talaandig community in Songhai, Lantapan, Bukidnon, enforced what Datu Migkoy Victorino formerly called his people's ancestral domain.

Based on this protocol, the community's "cultural guards" in 1996 confiscated 15 bags of plant specimens from researchers of the Philippine National Museum (PNM).

Cultural guards

The researchers got the specimens from Mt. Kitanglad without the community's prior informed consent, said Sarang, who shared his community's experience at a 2006 workshop in Baguio City, which was co-organized by Tebtebba and Third World Network (TWN).

The Philippine-based Tebtebba, a global nongovernment organization focusing on indigenous peoples' issues, and TWN, a nongovernment group whose main office is in Penang, Malaysia, have been facilitating capacity-building workshops for indigenous folk and farming communities championed the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity.

Sacred mountain

Many think the specimens they seized from Mt. Kitanglad—the PNM researchers, said Sarang, "transgressed a sacred area, robbed a cultural heritage and property, violated a customary regulation, created an environmental calamity and threatened the authority of the Bukidnon Panag—the right policies of the Talaandig leadership."

To the Talaandig, Mt. Kitanglad is not an ordinary mountain but a sacred area. Referred to as, a living monument of our history and origin as people," said Sarang.

"It is the foundation of our customary legislation and knowledge system. It is a place of worship [Hinandawan], a source of food and medicine, a learning center, a home and shelter. Mt. Kitanglad is the abode of our spirits who are known as Mentiris (Caretakers) and Manigbasa [Providers of human needs] that have established the Talaandig to survive for generations," he said.

The Bukidnon People's Alliance for Self-Determination and Autonomy (BUPASAD), a group of Talaandig leaders, said Sarang, "has been granted a sacred area, tabled a cultural heritage and property, violated a customary regulation, created an environmental calamity and threatened the authority of the Bukidnon Panag—the right policies of the Talaandig leadership."

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The Wada Ha Pusod provides the functions and framework of the authority on customary governance. Based on their oral history, the Talaandig customary governance has been ruled by a Council of Eight known as Walo Ha Pusod composed equally of male and female leaders.

To unilaterally invade the offense, the Talaandig leaders handed down the penalty: the PNM researchers had to give to the community 8 head of carabaos ("nawa buffaloes), 20 chickens, 8 measures each of red, white and black cloth and 1,500 pesos cash. To date the Talaandig people, however, the most important thing was to appease the spirits with a ritual.

Penalty

The carabaos, allocated to each of the Panag, served as symbolically restore the honor and dignity of community authority that was trampled upon by the act of the researchers.

In the old days, the penalty for this kind of violation was death or slavery. This was later revised through the principle of animal sacrifice. The researchers were forced a living substitute, as it can be killed or, being a much animal, taken as a slave.

Sarang asserted that the case involving the PNM remembered the people's faith in their traditional laws. Officials, however, said it was part of their mandate to collect and document the country's plant species.

Protocol

The Talaandig case happened at a time when Executive Order 247, which regulates bioprospecting (prospecting for biological resources for academic or commercial research) and requires a community's prior informed consent, was still a draft, and the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA) had yet to be legislated.

"Thus the action we took against the PNM researchers was basically an assertion of our customary obligation and responsibility," said Sarang.

A protocol is followed for visitors who want to enter Talaandig territory. An interested person must coordinate his visit with the community "because the people are responsible for anything that happens inside their territory. He must register his intention and reason for visiting, and inform the host of the community are there assigned.

Permission ritual

If he is accepted, he must agree to abide by the rules of the tribe. A permission ritual is then performed. A visitor must not abuse or take advantage of the permission given him.

A permission ritual with the spirit community of caretakers of the elements of creation precedes every activity in the Talaandig community. Opening a farm, planting, harvesting, managing a marriage, building a home, hunting, fishing and accepting visitors require a permission ritual. Without this ritual to obtain the blessings, an activity could end up a ruin-and-misfortune.

Under the open provision on free, prior and informed consent, ordering a permission ritual as a protocol is accepted. The cultural guards, being the spirit of the Talaandig people in implementing customary requirements, are to it that the protocol is complied with and rituals are performed.

Self-governance

The enforcement of customary laws in Mt. Kitanglad is self-governance in practice, a concrete assertion of cultural rights, preservation of indigenous heritage and traditional knowledge, and demand for resolution of crimes, offenses, according to Sarang.

He said the Talaandig people continued to maintain their customary rights in Mt. Kitanglad are of immeasurable significance and responsibility to protect and preserve the survival of their indigenous cultures and institutions for the future generations.

"Serious challenges remain but the decisive factor is the full awareness and commitment of indigenous leaders to protect and preserve the rights of their people," Sarang said.

Bilar registry

Another protective measure to protect agricultural genetic resources is the devising a "community registry," which proved effective in preserving locally used rice in Bohol.

The community registry established in Bilar, Bohol and the first in the country, is collective action by farming communities against the Plant Variety Protection (PVP) law (RA 9168), said Antonia Cumbanguy of the Bohol Network of Farmers' Rights.

Cumbanguy presented his community's experience at a workshop on traditional knowledge protection in 2006, which Tebtebba and TWN organized in Manila.

Signed into law in June 2002, the PVP Act limits the right of farmers to save their traditional seeds.

Organic farming

Farmers in Bilar plant and breed the traditional varieties of rice. They practice organic farming and seed exchange. From their harvest they choose and save the best seeds for the next cropping season, which they also share and exchange with other farmers.

Through organic farming they limit the use of pesticides and propagate different kinds of seeds. These are the traditional farming practices, which else in can be considered what may be termed in the PVP Act.

In an effort to prevent their seeds from being appropriated, farmers in Bilar decided to put up a community registry. Those in Barangay Canapnapan were the first to undertake this. Other barangays replicated the Canapnapan experience.

Community affidavit

The process in putting up a community registry was long and many hurdles had to be overcome. After a series of group meetings and discussions on the PVP Act, among others, the Canapnapan Farmers' Production and Resource Association (CFPRA) formulated a community affidavit.

The Canapnapan community affidavit was supplemented by a resolution, Resolution No. 1 Series of 2005, passed by the CFPRA. The resolution details how the owners in the registry would be updated every cropping season.

Seed banking

The Canapnapan affidavit declares that all rice varieties maintained in the community shall be preserved from the PVP Act, and that seeds of these varieties shall remain freely accessible to farmers for purposes of using, selling, storing and exchanging with other farmers. The affidavit also lists the names, kinds and basic characteristics of rice varieties that the community has been using and continually developing since it started participatory plant breeding.

The CFPRA joint affidavit partly reads: "...these varieties should not be registered by any person [because] these are ours, and that not to farmers through seed exchange can freely use these materials with our any conditions and restrictions as to its duration..."

The process entailed making an inventory of rice varieties and seed mapping. Each CFPRA member was assigned to list down the varieties existing in his own subsistence. The group also made a plant genetic resources diversity map wherein all the varieties planted in the community for that season were plotted.

The project staff of the non-government Southeast Asian Regional Institute for Community Empowerment (Searice) helped the farmers identify and document their rice varieties.

Seed banking was done at the household level, but since seeds were to be kept for every cropping season, a barangay inventory was kept under safekeeping at the research department of Bohol's agricultural college.

Government recognition

The farmers then worked for local government recognition of their community registry. They first lobbied the barangay council but were soon stymied ground because of politics and fears of the officials did not know the law. To convince the officers, the community held many consultations and discussions with them.

Their persistence paid off. The barangay council passed a resolution recognizing and affirming the community affidavit and expressing full support for the registry's efforts to protect local genetic resources.

Armed with the barangay recognition, the Canapnapan farmers took their community registry to the Sangguniang Bayan (municipal council). Three other farmers' organizations (Cuba, Dalisa, KMEC) in three other barangays have started their bodies in this policy. The farmers were also informed about their lack of legal protection and they also sought for legal registration.

They were also consulted by the Bohol provincial board on the language of the resolution, later declared, for the municipal council. The farmers finally got action by the new administration. The first Sangguniang Bayan passed Municipal Resolution No. 081, which recognizes the rice community registry of CFPRA, Cuba, Dalisa and KMEC.

Replication

The Bilar farmers' success is spreading to other communities in Bohol and other parts of the country. The farmers have started an awareness campaign on the community registry and the recognition of farmers' seeds at the village, municipal and provincial levels in Bohol.

In Mindanao, community registry models are being replicated in Malaybay and Negros barangays in Presidente Roxas, hosts Escalante. A tripartite agreement has been forged among CONCAPT, Searice and farmer partners on the protection and safekeeping of their seeds.

The farmers know the value of seeds. They are, after a life and seeds should remain free," Talaandig said.

Who are the Talaandig?

THE TALAANDIG, A SUBTRIBE of the Bukidnon tribe, are among 110 groups of indigenous peoples in the Philippines. The Talaandig [approximate population: 300,000] are known by nonconvened in the northern and western part of Bukidnon province.

The ancestral domain of the Talaandig is marked by the Mt. Kitanglad range whose highest peak of 2,938 meters above sea level is located in Lantapan and Malaybalay. The Mt. Kitanglad range covers some 47,276 hectares and the Talaandig consider the area their "remaining marker" from which their history emanates.

The peak of Dalangdalang was where Apo Agbilin, the creator of the Talaandig people, took refuge during a great flood thousands of years ago, said Datu Victorino Migkoy Saway, rising and history.

To the Talaandig, the Mt. Kitanglad range is also an important watershed where many rivers begin.

"If there is Mt. Kitanglad, there's no Talaandig," Saway said. [CC] a newsletter of the alliance of environmental groups monitoring developments under the Oblation on Biological Diversity.

The Talaandig used to practice their traditional tourism method of hunting. But this changed after logging was introduced in the community in the 1970s. Although some still practice rotational upland farming, others have embarked on high value crop production for the market.

Some also still have wild game and gather honey, which they sell to lowlanders. They also sell or barter woven handicrafts with other communities.

All resource activities before such as hunting and gathering were regulated by laws that evolved from religious beliefs, and included to everything, including economic and political life, according to Saway.

These customary laws governed and regulated the cultural practices and traditions of the Talaandig community, but these customary laws weakened after the eight concepts of law and governance were imposed, Saway said.

He said the "foreign" laws penalized massive logging and the collection of forest products for business.

"Under the new laws, many of our activities became illegal and destructive activities became legal," he said. "For example, the environment office legally gives farmers to cut trees and issues logging permits. It is very ironic, as the institution that is supposed to protect the environment actually destroys it. They legally issue millions of trees. But when one of our community members destroys only one tree, he is said to exist. It is 'illegal' for us to use even dehumidified logs," he said.

The Talaandig are among the indigenous peoples in the Philippines who are concerned that their customary laws apply to local governance. They are also asserting the right of indigenous peoples to free and prior informed consent before any development or undertaking is done in their communities.

Maurice Malanes,
Inquirer Northern Luzon

INQUIRER Mindanao

Nun finds 'right place' among women in crisis

By Ma. Cecilia Rodriguez
Cagayan de Oro City

YES, I AM," SR. DIANE Cabaugan candidly admits when asked if she considers herself an activist. "Being one is my foundation for doing my duties as a servant of God and people. Activism gave me a perspective."

The nun serves as project coordinator for the outreach program of the Religious of the Good Shepherd congregation based in Cagayan de Oro City.

Known for focusing on the needs of prostitutes, the RGS program offers social and spiritual assistance to women in crisis or survivors victims of domestic violence, incest and rape. "And you," Sister Diane interjects, "the prostituted women, who are most also coming victims."

Victims of exploitation

In a 2006 study conducted by the Coalition Against Trafficking of Women Asia Pacific, 80 percent of the 400,000 women in prostitution were victims of incest or rape before their adolescence. The remaining 20 percent were forced into prostitution due to unemployment or extreme poverty.

The local organization Bugong sa Kasanag (Moo for Enlightenment) or Tinku decenters prostituted women as those who are forced to trade sex for money out of poverty.

As one of its leading advisers, Sister Diane speaks proudly of Tinku, which counts the ex-members more than 100 women who are now grandmothers. "I treat them like my own sisters. Slowly they become enlightened. They now realize they are merely victims of exploitation," she says.

"In the four years that I've helped Tinku, 38 members are now leading new lives after giving up prostitution. I consider that a great achievement already."

But Sister Diane laments that the number of women in Cagayan de Oro who go into prostitution is steadily increasing. A booming city considered to be Mindanao's business hub and major tourist destination, Cagayan de Oro now has more than 700 prostituted women, the majority of whom are underage. Their ages range from 12 to 69 years, according to Tinku, but its findings have not been validated by the city health office.

Ebony Wendling, Tinku's chair, defends the data as first hand. "We see clients on the streets every night, we talk to them, and we try to get to know them because we want to help. We want to advise them on protecting themselves from diseases, especially those poor young women."

Systemic problem

Sister Diane talks freely of the root cause of prostitution and blames the system for it. "Prostitution is considered good business, that's the problem. Women, and even men, are exploited and traded like commodities. Businessmen see women in pain more profit for their establishments. The worst part is it is the prostituted women who are criminalized, while the pimps use their money to get away from the law," she says.

"We have a patriarchal society which created prostitution. In this setting, women are viewed as possessions, as commodities," she continues.

Such strong words are only some from someone constantly exposed to oppression and abuse. For 11 years, Sister Diane has served in various outreach programs of the RGS in northern Mindanao, Agusan and Surigao.

Before transferring to Cagayan de Oro, she worked with the Bontoc Igudgudan people in Caraga where, she says, she learned to love and respect Mother Earth. Side by side with the Lumad, she fought for the preservation of the environment against mining concessionaires and logging companies. "It was the same truth-value I am fighting now, it also involved rape," she recounts.

Eventually she realized that what she really wants is to help women in crisis. "Our community coordinator in the RGS allowed me to work with PWs (prostituted women). This is close to my heart because this is the first ministry of our mother foundress in one of our apostolates," said Sister Diane.

Gaining the trust of PWs proved to be a challenge for her. The nun talks of a "withdrawal" that she runs from and penetrate.

Restoring dignity

"If you are into prostitution, side by side di to ang dugo (drugs is involved), so their view of life is distorted. They don't disclose everything about themselves. It was difficult," recounts Sister Diane of her first encounters.

But she was steadfast. No long sermons, no lectures for penance. "I did not use

SR. DIANE Cabaugan, RGS

Across the NATION

Logging rears ugly head again in supposedly protected areas

LUCENA CITY—AN ENvironmentalist group expressed alarm over the resurgence of illegal logging operations inside the Quezon National Forest Park (QNFP).

Jay Lim, program officer of Tanggol Kalikasan (TK) Southern Tagalog, said a team of provincial environment, police and military officials discovered on Friday treatment of freshly cut trees inside the mountainous area of the village of Sipa in Padre Burgos town.

"The stumps and the treetrunk finches were barely a week old," Lim said.

He showed to the Inquirer video footage of fresh stumps and several pieces of lumber stored on the hilly slopes.

Lim said the team also found widespread charcoal-making inside the park.

Where there's charcoal...

"If there's charcoal making, there is always logging. It's a telltale sign," he said.

When contacted for comment, Benny Dapla, QNFP park superintendent, said he would immediately investigate the report to find out if the area is inside the park itself or in its buffer zone.

"Even if the alleged illegal logging operations are outside the park, it should be immediately stopped," Dapla said in a phone interview.

He said he hasn't received report of illegal logging inside the park in the boundary of the towns of Pagbilao, Atimonan and Padre Burgos.

Dapla admitted, though, the existence of charcoal-making inside the park by villagers living in its perimeters.

"It's part of their livelihood. Unless the government gives them alternative means of making a living, they will always resort to charcoal-making," he said.

Sea routes

Lim said the illegally cut forest products were being smuggled out of the forest park through a mountainous trail, which ends up in the delta of Tayabas Bay.

He said the seven lumber rafts to be brought to the Lucena seaport in boats or ships after they reach Tayabas Bay.

The QNFP was declared a protected area by Proclamation No. 604 dated Aug. 5, 1940, and the National Integrated Protected Areas System Act (Republic Act No. 7586) dated June 1, 1992.

It is surrounded by the aggregated land area of the municipalities of Pagbilao, Atimonan, Padre Burgos and Mauban.

The last time that illegal logging was reported inside the QNFP was in 2004.

The same forest products were then being smuggled out of the area by way of the Dalahican fish port, with the help of volunteers flag men manning the rigging road and acting as lookouts.

According to reports of former land environment officials, checkpoints were set up along the road to the area to curb illegal logging activities, but armed men with sophisticated weapons. Doffie T. Medina Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

LOCAL FACES
Indigenous peoples take part in a street parade at the 18th Foundation Day of La Union held in San Fernando City.

All women, anti-GMA rally set on March 8

LUCENA CITY—AFTER THE huge anti-Arroyo rally in Makati on Friday demanding the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo, a militant women's group announced an all-day protest action March 8 to coincide with International Women's Day.

"Women all over the country and from all walks of life have had it," said Emma de Jesus, Gabriela secretary general.

"Just as the nation is being rocked with Arroyo's traitorous plunder of the country's coffers, women will rock terror's presidency until she is ousted," De Jesus said in a statement.

"It further enrages us that Arroyo had the gall to demean Thanksgiving when in fact she is the epitome of indignity. This only opens a more widespread fury of women," De Jesus said, apparently referring to the reelection of Gma de Negros, wife of former Speaker Jose de Venecia Jr., who claimed that Mrs Arroyo's reform-minded bet just as a "housewife" whenever she tried to tell her about corruption in her government.

"Oil price hikes, EJAK killings, abduction and detention of businessmen, parents and children, extrajudicial, disappearance of basic social services on top of electoral fraud and corruption are the very issues that drive us, women, to demand that Gloria be ousted now," said De Jesus.

She said Gabriela chapters in Luzon, the Visayas and Mindanao would also stage anti-Arroyo mass actions.

"In Metro Manila, the group will be storming Mendiola," De Jesus said.

She said Gabriela will personally deliver to Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim its request for a rally permit.

De Jesus said that since March 8 falls on a Saturday, they expect Lim to allow the group to stage a protest action in Mendiola.

Lim has a standing policy to grant rally permits to Mendiola on weekends. Doffie T. Medina Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Casino rejected by Baguio prospers in La Union

BAGUIO CITY—THE CASINO issue has may have been won by the city government, which had opposed its operation, but the owners' owners may be laughing all the way to the bank.

Chard Ann Bain Arnold, corporate communications officer of Thunderbird Resorts Inc., said 60 percent of customers of the casino in nearby San Fernando City in La Union come from Baguio.

The casino attracts from 1,000 to 2,000 patrons daily, said Arnold.

Thunderbird is the same company that wanted to open a casino in Baguio for years ago but the thunder against it was stronger here.

Arnold said they are not planning to revive their campaign in Baguio when the next one is up in 2010 but the proponent with their operations at the Poro Point Freeport.

Instead, Baguio residents drive for an hour to La Union to play in the casino.

LUCKY chances in gambling.

Baguio Mayor Bernardo Bautista Jr. was among those who opposed the casino plan by Thunderbird. The proposed casino was supposed to have been built at Camp John Hay.

Bautista said the city still has no reason to approve the plan. The city council has been opposing proposals to establish a casino in Baguio in the past 10 years.

Thunderbird had signed a loan contract in 2006 with the Bases Conversion Development Authority for a 65-hectare resort at Poro Point, a former American naval base.

The first's operation was approved by the La Union government despite opposition from religious groups that were removed in the course of approving the casino.

Thunderbird complements the other casino in the region, the Fort Bonifacio Resort and Casino in Tarang City, which caters mostly to Taiwanese visitors.

The Pantaleon-based Thunderbird has plunked $13 million in its Poro Point resort since 2008 and will invest another $30 million for the second phase including the establishment of a golf course, said Arnold.

She said the firm also contributed P65 million in Aureon to the San Fernando Airport upgrading project.

The airport's rehabilitation is being undertaken to accommodate international flights from East Asia, Arnold said. Frank Cimmers, Inquirer Northern Luzon

NEWSBRIEFS

■ DAVAO CITY

NPA rebs kill 3 soldiers in ambush

THREE Army soldiers were killed while six others were wounded in an ambush by New People's Army (NPA) rebels in Toril District yesterday.

The attack came a day after the Army presided over the mass oath taking of support of 300 residents in Barangay Eulogio, long suspected of being a rebel haven.

Ramon Jay Quirin, Inquirer Mindanao

■ GENERAL SANTOS CITY

No. 3 al-Khobar leader arrested

POLICE arrested yesterday the alleged third highest-ranking leader of the al-Khobar kidnap-for-gang.

Chief Supt. Felicisimo Serapio, Davao Metropolitan police chief, said police arrested Rowgan Fortuna in Libungan, North Cotabato.

An arrest warrant was out for Fatima, who was linked to a series of bombings of buses in Central Mindanao.

Aquiles Z. Zonio, Inquirer Mindanao

■ LUCENA CITY

Mayor declares he, city for Gloria

THE MAYOR of Lucena City came out in the open to declare his support for President Macapagal-Arroyo and dragged the city with him in his declaration.

"We will not join the clamors to force President Arroyo to resign. I'm pro-GMA and so is Lucena City," said Mayor Ramon Talaga Jr.

A new banner hung outside the city's cathedral expressing support for Ms Arroyo.

Doffie T. Medina Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

Troops claim finding grave of NPA victims

GOVERNMENT troops said they discovered the skeletal remains of suspected victims of New People's Army rebels in Sitio Kalbario, Barangay Lahing-lahing in Gumaca, Quezon, and Sariaya, a regional military spokesperson said Saturday.

Army Maj. Randolph Cabangbang, of the Armed Forces of Southern Luzon Command (Sol-Com), said troops in Gumaca, Quezon, found a platoon of its top soldiers found the graves in Macleon, Gumaca.

Among the remains were those believed to be that of Pfc Brenda Echavez, a former intelligence officer of the military who was reported missing May 23 but was later being allegedly abducted by the NPA.

Doffie T. Medina Jr., Inquirer Southern Luzon

■ LOCAL AFFAIRS

Alaminos prepares for homecoming

ALAMINOS City is set to celebrate its annual fiesta, dubbed "BIGKIS Kalinangan Global Homecoming (BIGKIS) on March 14-15.

BINAGANSIA

Mayor Hermon Dragonera announced the third BIGKIS celebration during the city's patron saint, St. Joseph.

Dragonera, in a statement, said he is also encouraging tourists to take part in the festivities.

Ifugao governor says gov't policies helping destroy terraces

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—Ifugao Gov. Teodoro Baguilat Jr. has written a dagger into the government's supposed positive line for business over environment which, he said, had undermined efforts to preserve the Ifugao rice terraces and the Cordillera's watersheds.

Baguilat reminded the Department of Tourism (DOT) that the region's economy heavily relies the North Luzon Agribusiness Quadrangle (NLAQ), which had refused other provinces as more Optimalcities of the super region development approach.

He also criticized the Department of Tourism for treating the rice terraces as mere tourism sites and the department's penchant for promoting beaches instead of paying attention to eco-tours issues that impact on the environment.

"The environment must not be sacrificed because of agriculture. There must be a balance of priorities between agriculture, tourism and environment," Baguilat told the Inquirer in a phone interview on Friday.

Baguilat last week joined Mr. Governor Gov Mariano Ibdag and Kalinga Gov. Florencia Dumo in assailing the DOT alleged investment for Benguet in the disbursement of infrastructure funds.

But Cesar Rodriguez, DOT Cordillera director, said there was no inequitable distribution of road funds among the region's provinces.

He said Benguet received some additional funds because of its responsible industry's production.

Informed of Baguilat's complaints, Rodriguez said, "The DA gave Ifugao P3 million for the rice terraces. We could not give more since the fund is still limited. We support ecotourism based on indigenous and peoples."

But Baguilat refused to be appeased.

He said the DOT's problem extended to its inconsistent policies.

"In Metro Manila, the group will be storming Mendiola," De Jesus said.

She said Gabriela will personally deliver to Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim its request for a rally permit.

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Noli de Castro prepared, but not preparing

From page A1

perpetually advocating a constitutional succession in case of a vacancy in the presidency. But De Castro has been criticized as being unfit for the office.

Experience

De Castro laughed off the criticisms, saying his detractors might as well have said that a "shadow Cabinet" was doing the job for him. "Walang na-lang na aabide nanyo na akoy mag-shadow Cabinet."

He pointed out that in his three years as Vice President, he had never been absent from any Cabinet meeting and had been religiously performing the work assigned to him.

De Castro also said the presidency was not limited to college degrees or bookworms, and that the necessary preparations was based on his experience as Vice President and not on "crash courses or tutorials."

He parried text messages questioning his fitness to lead and expressing the opinion that he would also end up being corrupt.

He said such comments were part of the territory and that lack of criticism meant that he was irrelevant.

101 percent

De Castro said that like many Filipinos, he wanted to know the truth behind the NBN-ZTE scandal in which the First Couple have been implicated.

He said he was "101 percent" for the search for the truth."

He admitted that there was corruption in the government, just like, he said, in other governments.

But he said what was more important were the measures being taken by the government concerned to arrest and contain corruption.

Asked why he had not been visible lately, De Castro said: "I was fulfilling the duties and functions that I was tasked to do, like hosting OFW (overseas Filipino workers) matters, and marveling/amazed, ito."

Praised rally organizers

He praised the people who organized and took part in Friday's (yesterday) rally in Makati City which turned out to be the biggest protest action since the NBN-ZTE scandal erupted late last year.

He also expressed the belief that the truth would come out in the judicial process, not in political milieu.

"Ida-dan lamb at our truth eventually. Truth cannot be found in a rally, although we will have the cry for truth there. We have a judicial or legal process," De Castro said in a mix of English and Filipino.

He said what was important was for the accuser to present the evidence and the accused to come out with his/her version of the truth.

Dr. Castro said Romulo Neri, the director of the National Economic and Development Authority when the NBN-ZTE deal was approved, should reveal the truth behind the scandal to appease an angry people.

He said it was up to Neri to answer the remaining questions on the scandal in the proper judicial forum.

"But if he is lying, that is unacceptable," Dr. Castro told the reporters. "So should heed the call of his conscience in all that is happening now. Kailangan niyo ng gabay (He needs help). He has to understand that the truth will be his best weapon and shield. He should understand that in the end, the truth will always, always come out."

Dr. Castro added that the legal process could be used to show the truth from here, now the chair of the Commission on Higher Education, who has refused to heed summonses from the Senate to resume his testimony on the NBN-ZTE deal.

Asked why he was being very vocal for the truth behind the scandal to come out, Dr. Castro said that as Vice President, he was expected by the people to take a stand on this important issue.

"I've already made a stand," he said. "So I'm said, no one is above the law. Those who should be prosecuted and made liable must face the law and be brought to justice."

"I don't want to idlot-idlotin the Constitution. I want the law to prevail in our society. Sa liberty, kasi law is smarthy," he said.

Peaceful rally

Both Dr. Castro and his guest on the program, Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon, praised the conduct of the interfaith rally in Makati.

"The rally was orderly and peaceful. The leaders said that they were for the peaceful search for truth," Dr. Castro said.

Asked to comment on former President Corazon Aquino and Joseph Estrada sharing the stage during the rally, he said "history is like that—public figures have [to] (*See related story on Page A2.*)

Razon thanked Makati Mayor Jejomar Binay, who personally led the peaceful dispersal of the demonstrators at the end of the rally.

But Razon insisted that the police checkpoints were set up not to block rallyists' people from joining the rally but to check for possible weapons or firearms. (*Story on Page A6.*)

Told that the rally turned out peaceful because of the demonstrators themselves, and not the police, Razon agreed.

But he also said set up other dialogue between the PNP on one side and Binay, the rally organizers, civil society groups and the bishops on the other was responsible for the peaceful conduct of the rally.

THE LUCERO FAMILY AT THE MANDARIN Dr. Adelina Lucero is flanked by husband Conrado (right), Helmon Quinsayas (Mandarin GM, not in pic). Their two-bedroom suite, the same one used by Bernina Borelli, costs P84,000 per night. Mandarin treats a co-grunner of the asian games true. ALVIN KAMAD

Wish come true: Mandarin fetes doc, 88, . . .

From page A1

Adelina says her love for and loyalty to the Inquirer are the reasons she was chosen. "I have been reading the paper since it started publishing 22 years ago," says the Bulacan native, who now resides in Quezon City with her family.

Despite her failing vision, reading the paper is an important part of Adelina's restaurant routine. She uses her cellphone eyeglasses and a magnifying glass and spends "practically the whole day" reading her favorite newspaper.

"The first thing I read is the main (news) section, [followed by] editorial, science and entertainment. I read the sports section first when Manny Pacquiao is featured," she says, admitting she's a fan of the boxing champ.

Wow suite

When Adelina and her family arrived at the hotel on Feb. 22, they were expecting to check into a regular room. When they were led to a two-bedroom suite, all they could say was "Wow!"

The suite had lush flowers, a good-sized couch and four TV sets—including one in the bathroom.

"It had everything we could ever want for a grand vacation," Adelina says.

Although the three could have used any of the hotel's facilities—gym, spa and a swimming pool—they decided to spend most of their time lazing around in their comfortable beds.

Food trip

They also went on a food trip and tried most of the Mandarin restaurant cuisines—from The Fresh which serves Continental cuisine to Tin Hau for Chinese food.

The Lucero family knew they were staying in an expensive suite; nevertheless, they still all gasped when they found out that a night's stay in their room costs P80,000.

The hotel's excellent service impressed Conrado, a practicing doctor in Manila Doctors' Hospital. "I was very impressed with the service. It was superb, everyone was very courteous," he said.

Adelina enjoyed the view of the Makati skyline from their 18th floor suite, but not as much as reading the Inquirer while sitting in the suite's comfortable couch.

Fresh news

"It's amazing how the paper keeps itself fresh every day. There's always something new, something interesting," she says. "The layout and layout of the paper are attractive; the paper gives emphasis to the most important news."

In coming up with her wish, Adelina says she considered her health, as well as her husband's. (I not for extraordinaria, she would have opted for a trip to Borneo).

"But Conrado and I are already old. We can no longer undertake strenuous trips," says how she put it in the bathroom lotter she sent to the location.

However, Adelina says her experience at the Mandarin Oriental Manila was "more than perfect and went beyond Dad's expectations."

Healthy and energetic

"It was a hands-free weekend for all of us. We're very thankful to everyone who made my wish come true," Adelina says, adding that she had not felt so physically and mentally relaxed in a long time.

As the family prepared to check out of the hotel last Monday, they only had kind words for Helmut Guinsayas, the hotel's general manager, who stopped by to meet them. He even posed with the Luceros for souvenir photos.

Asked if they wanted to stay longer at the Mandarin, their collective answer was a no, although they worried about their pets remaining in their home.

Despite her age, Adelina remains healthy and energetic. She attributes this to reading the Inquirer which provides her with the latest news and information and keeps her mind sharp.

Josie Natori fashion affirms what's right in the Filipino

From page A1

former banker Natori, is celebrating its 30th year. This was also Natori's first show in her home country in more than a decade.

Consisting of more than 100 pieces (ensembles and coordinates), the fashion collection was of a caliber the country hasn't seen in years, even for jaded fashionistas. The fashion—indeed the art—was in a league of its own, in terms of design, fabric selection, drama-ty, but more important to us Filipinos, in terms of Filipino craftsmanship.

For Natori, the foremost consideration also came the next morning when Hong Kong's style icon and social tycoon Joyce Ma bought a sizeable part of the collection.

Not mass production

One couldn't help but take pride in the knowledge that the exquisite art was executed by consummate and headless in Pasig, where the Natori factory remains to this day. This is an encouraging thought in this day and age when China has killed any Filipino entrepreneur's attempt at mass production.

"I is not in mass production but in fine craftsmanship where Filipinos can excel," Natori said at after the show. "And what makes our craftsmanship special, value given is the edge, is the sophistication, the touch of modernity."

Natori says Filipino craftsmanship is, for instance, embroidery, be the prints and designs in her rich archives—from 18th century prints to illustrations and graphics that the House of Natori has produced the past 30 years.

Indeed, the Natori collection bore the seamless blending of East and West that has always been the distinct identity enjoyed by Natori in the cutthroat world of the international fashion industry. Not only was the opening parade of lingerie-inspired, it was also elegant.

It is widely known that Natori's entry into the fashion industry was through night shirts made in the Philippines that she sold in New York retail. At time, the banker, the first woman vice president of Merrill Lynch, would leave banking to design luxurious lingerie. In Natori's hands, innerwear could also be elegant outerwear that a woman could wear outside her boudoir and to social functions.

From innerwear and sleepwear, Natori expanded into elegant fashion accessories, and in recent years, into a home line—throws, bedsheets—and now, in ready-to-wear, and even a men's line. These were all shown in last Friday's well-produced show (she copped the seasoned producer of Oscar de la Renta).

It a pace that never dragged, out came the 30 models in lingerie, robes, cocktail wear, evening wear, casual shirts and tops from her just-launched Natorious RTW line, and the men in slacks and shorts. They were in the finest silks, laces and other elegant fabrics. At certain points, the models lugged richly designed blankets or pillow covers.

"The idea," Natori said, "was to show that every one was designed to throw on your shoulders, and it comes out as a shawl."

Natural materials

Her accessories such as necklaces and bangles were of wood, shell, mother of pearl, jade and other natural material, constructed exquisitely.

Natori agreed to do the fundraising show to benefit the Filipino artists who are lauded by the Asian Cultural Council of which she is a trustee. For several decades now, ACC has given grants to artists all over Asia. It was initially headed by the Rockefellers.

The ACC's chair, Elizabeth McCormack, said before the show that while the world is so divided, the arts remain the only means to unify the world. Ms. McCormack was the dean and later president of New York's Manhattanville College when Natori took up economics.

Imelda Marcos at head table

The evening had an interesting guest mix. At the presidential table were Imelda Marcos with Natori's parents, Felipe and Angelita Cruz. At other tables were Imelda Calmanay, the Ramos-in-law of Philippine retail, and Tessie Sy-Coson, the head of Banco de Oro which sponsored the event. Sacot over-graciously designed a phone pouch for the show's other sponsor, Solar.

TAKE A BOW Josie Cruz-Natori with husband Ben Arvo showed at the end of her 100-piece collection of a caliber that even the well-traveled fashionistas have not seen in years. It was a fundraiser to benefit the Asian Cultural Council and the Asian Society. The council funds artists all over Asia. STEPHEN CHERNIN

SUDDENLY, STUDENT POWER La Salle high school students in Iligan City, like in the interfaith rally in Makati, rake the lead in upholding the values that make a Filipino the best asset of his/her country

It's beginning to look a lot yesterday

HER MOTHER'S DAUGHTER Baby Aquino Cruz, eldest daughter of ex-President Cory, scores points with former Quezon City Mayor Mel Mathay, who's rarely seen in any kind of rally pro- or anti-. INQUIRER PHOTO

The rally scene is beginning to look and feel a lot like the street that stirred mind and heart. Those times that inspired people yearning to live the world over to break off their chain. Like the Filipinos did on Feb. 22 years ago. It was democracy's finest hour in our land.

Even most of the photos on this page were taken by Mandy Navarro who single-handedly shot the Who's Who of Manila's 400 who graced yesterday's rallies open meeting, if not grouping with mommy who knows, circa Marcos era. Mandy took their pictures regularly for pictorial spreads in the Mr & Mrs Special Edition, the forerunner of the Inquirer. Here we go again.

THE ORIGINALS From Cory-ites, Louie Aquino and Baby Gil Freire.

NEVER TOO LATE THE HERO NBA JET1 star reinvents Jun Lozada gets more than his share of 15 minutes of fame. INQUIRER PHOTO

FAMILIAR FACES Maricon Ocampo (r) and Bonbay Yeo Perez-Nagal INQUIRER PHOTO

FAMILY OUTING The family that rallies together stays together. Party-list Rep. Satur Ocampo and wife Bobbit Malay with son Aralo and daughter Gloria Ocampo-Pasilao with son Dakan. INQUIRER PHOTO

ACTOR'S ACTOR Rio Medina is not acting. He's for real, and he's real mad. INQUIRER PHOTO

TWO GENERATIONS Josie Lichauco and daughter bonding at the corner of Paseo de Roxas and Ayala Ave. INQUIRER PHOTO

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN GMA is such a concern at the University of the Philippines in Baguio City.

THE FPJ CONTINGENT Emulation pasks a lan elyanoh. From left are Susan Tagle, Marites Vera-Perez and Grace Poe-Llamanzares

THE FESTIVE mood shines on the faces of, from left, Lucille Villanueva, Dr. Cleotis Belga and Mrs. Josie Tordesca

GATHERING CLOUDS Hundreds of supporters rules their clenched fists as they march through a street in Legaspi City crying out for the ouster of President Arroyo.

THREE GENERATIONS OF AMBEDOS Fighting for righteous leadership runs in the family of Arnolds Signion-Regma, daughter-in-law Bliech Oreste and her daughter Ayana

BEST SELLING What's a rally Pinoy-style without vendors? Sunog, Marchandise sells protest messages on T-shirts, coffeed and hat.

DOWN TO EARTH Glory Faria, former flight attendant.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF TOWN The so-called Kampuhan ng Mamamayan holds an overnight peace camp at the Welcome Rotonda in Quezon City to support President Arroyo and affirm no such justice through peaceful means.

FASHION STATEMENT Ruben Pilapil wears a designer bib.

NEWS

WELCOME TO MY WORLD
A stingray appears to smile at visitors in welcome to Manila Ocean Park which had its soft opening on Saturday. The ocean park, located behind the Quirino Grandstand at Rizal Park, lets visitors see the creatures of the deep up close in their natural habitat without getting wet. BEN CAMBA

De Venecia to stay on as Lakas-CMD head, says lawyer

By Norman Bordadora

A SPOKESPERSON FOR PANGASINAN REP. JOSE DE VENECIA said yesterday the ousted Speaker was not inclined to tender his resignation as president of the ruling Lakas-Christian Muslim Democrats party even though he has severed his ties with President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Instead, De Venecia's legal counsel Raul Lambino said...Mr Arroyo should be the one expelled from Lakas "for violating the party's Christian principles and ideology."

Lambino said De Venecia would not resign as party president "for exposing the scandals, corruption and greed that are tainting the government of (Mr Arroyo)."

"Lakas-CMD needs De Venecia as the co-founder of the party and as the most visible advocate of genuine democracy and Christian-Muslim coalition and cooperation," Lambino said.

De Venecia was recently elected chair of Centrist Democrats International (CDI) for the Asia-Pacific region and also won a third term as vice president of CDI worldwide. CDI is the mother party of Lakas.

"[President] Gloria [Macapagal-Arroyo should be the one to quit Lakas-CMD," Lambino said, pointing to the allegations of corruption against Ms Arroyo.

No decency

Lakas leaders, including its vice president for recruitment, Eastern Samar del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay and Quezon City Rep. Matias Defensor, have been quoted as saying De Venecia should quit as president of the ruling party since his recent leaders had virtually aligned him with the opposition.

Concerned Lambino: "Where do laws forbid 'turang' (betrayal), president of the Nacionalista Party in the 1950s, wrote a white paper against the late President Carlos P. Garcia, a party mate, Rodrigues was not asked to quit the party," Lambino said.

"There was decency then among our political leaders—which is unfortunately wanting among our present crop of political leaders. Now Malacañang wants party members to shut their mouths and eyes about the reported wrongdoings linked to the First Family and must see nothing, or accept the lowest," he said.

Thumbs down merger

Lambino said De Venecia had various reasons, President Fidel Ramos, the party's chair emeritus, is thumb down on the ongoing merger between Lakas and Ms Arroyo's other party, the Kabalikat ng Malayang Pilipino (Kampi).

He confirmed that De Venecia met with Lakas leaders last week before he left the country to speak before a gathering of information and communications technology stakeholders at the United Nations in New York.

Lambino said De Venecia on Tuesday met with Ramos and Quezon City Mayor Feliciano Belmonte, one of the party's two possible presidential candidates in 2010.

Brits still bullish on RP despite rallies, says envoy

By Cynthia D. Balana

INVESTORS FROM GREAT BRITAIN PUTTING their money into the country have remained unspooked by the recent street protests and strident calls for the resignation of President Macapagal-Arroyo, according to British Ambassador to Manila Peter Sedgwick.

Sedgwick said he hoped that said demonstrations in connection with the jacked telecommunications deal with the Chinese firm ZTE would be conducted in a peaceful manner, showing due respect for the law and the democratic process.

"There continued to be a strong flow of new British investments into the Philippines and it is important that the business environment remains conducive in such manner," he said.

Sedgwick lamented that dutchie market attendant to the protests had spread like chaos foreign enthusiasm, saying that a text message had emerged saying that the British Embassy is ripped up over issues on Friday because of the mere fourth rally in Makati City.

Closely monitoring

"The British embassy will be open as usual," he stressed.

"In fact, I met with the Philippine-British Business Council to discuss how to stimulate more interest from the UK to the Philippines," he said.

Not to part, the United States Embassy in Manila said it was closely monitoring the unfolding events in the Philippines, and was paying particular attention to the report of an assassination attempt on President Arroyo.

"We are aware of the reports in the media and are monitoring them closely," said Rebecca Thompson, embassy spokesperson.

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Angels of the lost and found

By Stephanie R. Asuncion

VETERAN BROADCAST JOURnalist Mike Enriquez firmly believes that there are angels who dwell among us. Some, in fact, drop by every now and then at the GMA Network Inc. building on Edsa, Quezon City to be interviewed on his morning talk show program, "Saksi sa Dobol B," over radio station dzBB.

But the angels Enriquez has some dim contact with are not the winged creatures that century messages from God to keep people away from harm or danger. They are average, everyday human folk who come to him for one purpose: To seek his help in retrieving items they loosed in their rightful owners.

"They're mostly taxi drivers, security guards, messengers. Whenever I introduce them on my radio program, I say, 'May anghel nga rin dito ngayong umaga (There's an angel here this morning)'," Enriquez told the reporter in a recent interview.

Heaven-sent

"I call them angels because they're heaven sent, not just to the owners of the lost items, but to listeners and to us. You know how it is in this line of work. You bore your innocence overnight and your cynicism level doubles in one flick of a finger. But these people bring your back on the old fashioned virtues of honesty and sincerity," he said.

Enriquez, Sr., is the senior vice president for radio of GMA, one of the country's largest broadcast networks. Apart from having one of the most recognizable voices on radio, he also anchors GMA's prime time television newscast, "24 Oras," and is the host of "Imbestigador," a public service program which exposes anomalies and graft in government.

Although he can no longer remember the first time someone came to the radio station to return a lost item, the earliest incident he can recall involved a messenger.

"Several years ago, someone dropped a pouch which contained money in a grocery shop in Quiapo (Manila). It was found by a messenger who returned it through our station. We broadcast it and we were able to find the owner of the pouch," he said.

First of many

That incident later turned out to be just one in a string of "lost and found" cases involving foreigners and his radio show. Over the years, more "angels" came to him with their find: Cash in different denominations ("At times, it's from like ten's to the Central bank," he remarked), cameras, a laptop, checks, passports, bank passbooks, rolls of textiles, paintings, and at one time, a coin that fell off a truck.

"Of course, we didn't have a place for the coin so we just referred the matter to the MMDA (Metropolitan Manila Development Authority) and the DENR (Department of Environment and Natural Resources)," he said.

A taxi driver once returned a gun left behind by a chicken dean in his cab. The gun, loaded on its markings, belonged to a policeman. Enriquez promptly called up the chief of the Philippine National Police to report the find. "He was forced to say on the air that the policeman was probably drunk which is why he forgot his gun inside the cab. Ayt yung pala," he said.

Unforgettable incident

Although he may have lost count of the number of times he was approached by an angel, there is one incident he said he will never forget. It involved a taxi driver who returned P50,000 to a woman who was going to use the money for her child's operation.

"That taxi driver wasn't even a regular. He was a baby- and appropriate retailer who would take out the cab whenever the regular driver was not available. On that day, he had just taken his passenger to the airport because she was leaving on an early flight for Catabato. The driver found out that the bad left her bag after she alighted from his cab. He opened the bag, saw the cash and promptly returned to the airport in try to find the passenger. He came to us after he failed to find her," Enriquez said.

The story fortunately had a happy ending. The money was returned to its owner and the driver's efforts did not go unrecognized.

Free trip plus pocket money

"He lived in a depressed area in Taguig City and he was from the Visayas," Enriquez recalled. "It turned out that people from a shipping line (Negros Navigation) were listening while I did the interview. They gave him a free trip to his hometown with his family. Someone else gave him pocket money."

While on air, the man also spoke of his dream of becoming a teacher.

"In between jobs, he would always bring his bio-data. He had it with him when he returned the money. Here two or three months, he came back one early morning with a smile and cold tea. 'Sir, nakabalik na ako after, nakatanggap na ako ng bonus (I've already turned in) and I'm now in the radio and found him as a assistant," Enriquez recalled.

Indescribable smile

All the angels, according to him, have something in common: "They have this smile which cannot be described. And there are people who are in the need of money. They could have put the money they found to good use—for the education of their children or to take them over to the next payday—and no one would have known if they had pocketed it. But instead, they come here. They do not only spend time and effort, they also spend money because they had to pay for their own fare. The taxi driver I was talking about, for example, came during such busy situation (during) an eclipse."

Another thing the angels had in common were their reasons for returning the lost items they had found. "The number one reason was that they didn't want to benefit from something they hadn't worked for. Their second reason was 'The owner might need this more than I do.' And those are people who don't know where they are going to get the money for their rent or their electric bill next month. There were are others who are single, God-fearing Filipinos," Enriquez said.

Yet there are cynics who say that the added bonus of being interviewed on his ra-

ANGELS, A42

"I call them angels because they're heaven sent, not just to the owners but to listeners and to us"

MIKE ENRIQUEZ: Touched by angels

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At 98, retired doc still drives his car around QC

By Marlon Ramos

AT 98, DR. JOSE JAVIER CONEJO very well be the country's oldest holder of a driver's license.

Despite his age, he still goes behind the wheel, driving every Sunday to a nearby church to attend the 5:30 a.m. Mass or to make his rounds in Filinvest, or to the grocery store.

When he went to the Land Transportation Office recently, he was surprised when his application for the renewal of his driver's license was almost rejected down.

"They (LTO employees) asked me if I could still drive. I replied that I may be a better driver than most of them," he said, laughing.

After handling the tests applications usually go through. Javier essentially got his license. "I passed all the tests with flying colors," he said.

Javier, however, admitted that he cannot drive long distances. "The terrible traffic in Metro Manila is bad for my legs," he told the business.

Born on July 19, 1907, Javier is the seventh of 14 siblings.

Despite his age, he can still perform tasks which can be quite difficult for other people his age.

He still walks around without a cane and vividly remembers the names of the friends he met 80 years ago.

"I actually have more problems walking than driving," he said.

When not behind the wheel, Javier can be found at home with his wife, reading the Bible and other religious books.

He also does the repairs at their modest home in Sucat. His wife Josefa Sicat, Quezon City's oldest he has been staying with his wife since his retirement after a 16-year stint as a doctor in Okinawa, Japan.

"I've always been the repairman and carpenter of our home," he said.

A survivor of the Death March during the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, Javier believes his secret to long life must be in his genes.

His older brother, Fernando, turned 100 years old last December and was recently honored in the school living alumnus of the University of the Philippines. Another brother aged 91 still teaches at the Fordham University in New York. Two of his sisters died in their 90s.

Javier said although he ordered vitamins, he has always watched his diet. "I only eat simple foods. I prefer vegetables more," he said.

He said he has never smoked and would drink beer only occasionally.

He has also stayed away from late night parties, making sure that he sleeps at 8 p.m. and gets up at 5:30 a.m.

Javier said he has maintained this rigid regimen since he entered the military service during the Second World War.

Even before he completed his medical degree at the University of Sto. Tomas in 1934, he was already interested to practice medicine in the United States.

But Javier's family could barely come up with the money he needed for his journey.

So when the war broke out, he was drafted into the Army along with thousands of young Filipinos. "I actually became a soldier by mistake," he recalled.

"We were picked to join the Army randomly. I was among those who were a little intelligent when joining the Army. But I tend to regret that it was a chance for me to go to the US."

During the Japanese Occupation, Javier served in various capacities as a military doctor and said remembers of the most Filipino and American forces.

While in Bataan, he and thousands of other Filipino guerrillas were arrested and tortured during the infamous Death March to Capas, Tarlac.

According to historians, less than 1,000 prisoners survived the long and arduous trek. Javier and Filipinos who secretly provided the guerrillas with water helped him survive.

After the defeat of the Japanese Imperial army, he was invited by an American doctor to serve in a military hospital in Okinawa, Japan, in 1949.

For Javier, the saying, "Life begins at 40," couldn't be truer in his case. It was at the age of 41 when he said he decided it was time for him to settle down.

Javier promptly quit his job in Japan, went back to his hometown of Lucena, Quezon Province and started looking for a bride. "I was lonely in Japan. I felt I had to have a wife and children," he said.

In just a few months, he was married to Filomena, a native and a family friend who was 18 years his junior.

He just believes his wife could give birth to their first child. Javier got a call from his former employer in Okinawa asking him to come back.

"I was fortunate because the owner of the hospital where I worked paid for my wife's ticket," he said. "But I was hesitant to go back. It's hard to live in a foreign country where you hardly know anybody."

Despite his fears, however, the couple left for Okinawa where they stayed until Javier retired in 1986.

The retired professor now dedicates time, except for a daughter, are now based in the United States.

Javier said that although he never got to realize his dream of becoming a doctor in the US, he never regretted working in Japan.

"The Japanese were friendly to the Filipinos community there even though they know that we are allies of the Americans who then controlled Okinawa," he said.

Javier's age has not made him lose his will and sense of humor.

When the business visited him, Javier looked surprised as he asked this writer about the topic of the interview.

When he was told that it would be about the concerns of old men, he said, "It would be better if you were to interview me when I turn 100."

Then, he told his wife to wear her hoodie but because they would go to the "Lena palooza" event where couples, mostly young men, would gather to break the world record for the most number of couples kissing simultaneously.

"Of course we didn't go there. I told him that people would just make fun of us. But I had a good laugh when he said that," Filomena said.

Javier said he is keen on going back to the LTO when he renews his license after three years.

When the agency's employees told him to see them in 2011, he jokingly replied, "Okay, but I'm not sure if I would still be alive by then."

AT 98, DR. (JOSE Javier says he has more problems walking than driving.

THE DOCTOR with his wife, Filomena.

MaSci Batch '70 members pay it forward through A2SP project

By Rubenia Rosada
Contributor

WHAT THEY ARE DOING MAY be just a drop in the bucket.

Still, members of the Manila Science High School's batch 1970 are proud to be doing their share. Through their Adopt-a-Student Project (A2SP) which is now on its ninth year, they have been helping Manila (the member graduates and students have given the school) students stay in school instead of transferring or dropping out altogether because of financial difficulties.

The prime mover of the project are those who found down-to-earth circumstances where they were still MaSci students more than three decades ago. It is their way of giving back the blessings they received during those days.

The A2SP has also provided members of Batch '70 with a way to pay tribute to their classmates and teachers, some of whom have passed on. Through a "naming privilege," pledges donors make to the school fund the scholars' stipend—get to pick the name of their scholarship grants.

As a result, some grants have been named after the following people: Deceased members of Batch '70 Chato Baylosis, Nonong Balaton and Tita Pandan; Batch '69 members Asuelo Reese and Rafael Ovalez; Catalunan teacher Morena Sto. Tomas; Math teacher Bonifacia Mercurio and Alumnus Welder, one of the school's principals.

Ten members of Class '70 have also joined the growing list of donors, along with three professors from the University of Houston in Texas.

Before the commencement of A2SP, Batch '70 had been donating books and laboratory equipment, in addition to serving the Philippines in group missions. To add, a "social dimension" to what they were doing as a group, they came up with the project.

After much deliberation and numerous heated debates over the pros and cons of different proposals, the majority decided to launch A2SP in 2002 when they took in two scholars for the pilot stage of the project to test its viability and sustainability and to refine its implementation strategy.

The following year, more and more donors made a commitment to provide funding. This year, the project is supporting 26 students, six in college and 20 in high school. Already 11 scholars have graduated with five more about to complete their high school education this month.

The scholars are chosen from incoming sophomores who have received one full year of the rigorous MaSci academic requirement.

They should have proven themselves to be academically adequate, though financially strapped, and are recommended by their advisers and guidance counselors who have witnessed their financial state for some time.

The scholars enjoy a monthly stipend of P1,500.

As one scholar said her Christmas, "I am grateful and thankful to God for bringing all of you into my life."

Just a drop in the bucket, but it has certainly gone a long way.

Hopefully, the spirit of sharing lives on.

MEMBERS of Batch 1970 with their scholars and friends at last year's Christmas party.

Angels of the lost and found

From page A23

PARAQUAT says he has lost count of the number of times he was approached by angels.

AMONG the last items returned by angels through Enrique's program are cash, cameras, a laptop computer and clothes.

die program and appearing on "24 Oras" might be yet another reason.

"That's true," Paraquat agreed, "but to us, the most overriding value is the lesson and the inspiration they impart. We do memorable put them on the air ... but that's the least we can do for them, regardless of their motives."

He further added, "We don't put all of them on air. Some don't want to be interviewed. Some don't even want to let listeners to the source of the items they are returning because there are times they are offered a reward and some of them don't want to take it."

Resting fame

Besides, Enriquez seem set to say the public has a short memory. "Publicity is fleeting. These guys don't become famous. Heaven forgot all about them the day after they came out on radio and TV. Even we don't remember their names and faces unless we look in our records. The publicity is just a license but the innate goodness and sincerity of these people, to me, is the reward."

According to him, the angels have earned not to be a blessing, not only for the station but "more especially for the people."

"They inspire our listeners who believe that there's still hope in the Filipino, that the Filipino is by nature a good, caring and honest person and not a fun-loving (corrupt) or ungrateful (thieves)," Enriquez explained.

Some listeners, he added, are not just moved to tears (There are a lot of people who cry on and say "I'm alone in my car listening to your program and I'm crying," Enriquez said) but even taking "real, concrete action."

"Some guys get job offers. Some listeners call in up and say 'We want to hire that guy. That's the kind of employee we want,'" he said.

Then there are others who have requested that the angels run for Congress and/or a party-list group called—what else but—"Angkel." "At least, we know these people won't steal from us," read a text message sent to the station.

As for Enriquez, meeting an angel makes the effort of getting up at 4 a.m. from Monday to Friday (his on-like program starts at 5:30 a.m.) worth it.

Wake me appor

"The human body was not created by God to wake up at 4 a.m., no matter if you sleep at 8 the afternoon before. But when I wake up at 4 a.m. and it's said to get out of bed, I ask myself, 'Will there be an angel this morning?' That's like drinking a gallon of coffee," he said.

Then he winks for a time when one of honesty would be so common that it would be the people who touch things that weren't theirs who would end up in the news?

"Yes, because we have this faith in people which has been strengthened by all of these angels," said Enriquez. "We'd like to think that people in the ordinary everyday scrupe Filipino. We have to say that if a dog bites a man, that's not news but if a man bites a dog, that's news. That's probably why acts of honesty don't get the headlines. They happen every day."

"THE SOLUTION lies not just in giving exchange rate protection, it lies in distribution. That's why we at DBP need to help those start a business. It gives them pride. It makes them an entrepreneur."
PETRALBO BENOS, January 2008

GLOBAL Pinoy

Editor Gerry Lirio

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This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas living on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world to secure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

Poor boy from Palawan on a European cruise

By TJ Burgonio

ZURICH—AFTER NEARLY TWO YEARS OF working part-time as a masseur here, Elizer Lorca couldn't help but break the good news that he has found a job that would take him around Europe.

A hotel management graduate of the prestigious Les Roches School of Hotel Management here, Lorca had just gotten a call in late January confirming that he got the job at a luxury ship that tours Europe.

"Yehey!," the stocky Lorca, 31, said in an interview at the Filipino-owned Golden Asian Store here, a watering hole of the small Filipino community. "It was never in my mind this can happen."

Until the call came, he has had a tough time landing jobs at hotels since he returned here in 2006—despite his credentials. The reason: He doesn't speak German as well as the locals do.

But he didn't have to sprout Teutonic features to be considered a foreigner, he found out. Even applicants to relatively liberal states through marriage.

The Swiss give generous tips that he has managed to send money back home in Buenavista, Iloilo, he discovered of landing a job as a hotel busboy.

That was why this new job is a luxury ship meant so much to him because it was an affirmation that he—a poor boy from Palawan who had gone through the pits and overcompleted a terrible time—has made it big.

And he credits all this to sheer luck and persistence.

Thanks to a Scottish couple

Lorca said his education at a college in Manila, and then at Les Roches, and his stay in Zurich after graduation were all financed by a philanthropic Scottish couple.

He met the childless couple while working as a taxi guide for foreigners in Makati City.

"They treated me like a son," he said of the couple, whom he refused to name.

Before the couple plucked him out of poverty, the high school graduate worked as a messenger at a consultancy firm. He did a stint just after his job as a taxi guide for foreigners in Makati City.

He rarely went to Manila even before, he said.

After graduating from high school in 1999 in Turtay, an impoverished town on the southern part of Palawan, Lorca boarded a ship for Manila where he took on a series of odd jobs.

"I would walk a long stretch of Iloilo and go from one establishment to another inquiring about job openings. I experienced not eating anything except rice [beaten oil] pure sit-sit and coffee," he said.

Lorca grabbed any opportunity to eke it if it meant having bellow blocks in a foul-smelling canal, hopping from house to house offering soaps and shampoos that concerned prices and piling home made oriental mesenbrye.

The list of odd jobs he took was endless, he said.

He applied for a job at the then very popular bar-food chains, but he was rejected because he had poor facility in English.

Suicide thoughts

"It was so difficult that I went to commit suicide," he said. "I was the only problematic who gave to Manila and ends up with nothing. No wonder many people end up as vagabonds or hold-up men, I thought then."

But Lorca, the middle of five children, persisted. He learn English, he bought a dictionary, watched English programs and read newspapers.

Then came the hostels people. They took a liking to him for his good manner. They would send him money from abroad on his birthdays.

"Sister, I told them if you really want to help me, help me go back to school," he recalled telling the foster parents.

Within weeks, the couple sent him money to enroll in a hotel management course in the metropolis. Iloilo International School and College in the Ortigas City in 2000. After a year, he finished the course.

He was supposed to finish a complementary two-year course on hotel management in the United Kingdom, but his entry application was not approved in the aftermath of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in the United States.

His foster parents continued him by enrolling him at Le Roches in 2003 to pursue the same course. He graduated in 2006 and then flew back to Palawan to attend the burial of his mother.

Shortly after, he took a flight back to Zurich to say his last hugs.

"I had lucky. Yes, never know what's gonna happen to your life. Before, I wanted to give up," he said.

"Now, each time I look at a plane, I'd look out the window and I'd remember the ships when, as a boy, I would lie out in the hill looking out and then and a plane would fly by. I wanted then when I'd be able to board one. It's such a good feeling to fly and remember those days."

Good things come to those who wait—like this hotel management graduate who almost killed himself out of desperation while doing odd jobs in Metro Manila

ELIZER LORCA: I used to feed a cardiac to a farm in the Philippines. Now I am in Switzerland ready to work in a luxury ship.

A lending company with a heart

By Kenneth M. del Rosario

DON'T SELL YOUR CARABAO or mortgage that house just yet.

There is a better way to borrow money without the burden of high interest rates and the hassle of complicated paperwork, said a Filipino businessman here who owns a company that extends hassle-free financial assistance to would-be OFWs.

It was this thought that brought to life Global Resources Credit Corp., a lending company specifically structured to answer the financial needs of overseas workers.

"I have developed a soft spot for OFWs," said Isabel Bautista, owner and head of the institution and product of Homebuilders, a concern done for OFWs.

"I understand how hard it is to be separated from your loved ones so I want to help them," said the 52-year-old Isabel.

A former flight attendant and chief purser of Cathay Pacific Airlines, Isabel had met several Pinoys on board her flights. An exchange of stories between them had deepened Isabel's concern for her fellow countrymen.

While banks and other lending institutions tend to require mostly hard-to-get documents in a bank for OFWs in Taiwan cash—Isabel makes sure that her lending company, with as low as 2 percent interest rate, is the "most preferred financing company for OFWs" in terms of financial help.

And despite the lending company did since it started operations in 1998. According to Isabel, hundreds of OFWs—from caregivers and nurses in Canada, to chefs and teachers in London, and engineers and construction workers in Israel, among many others—have benefited from the favorable arrangement she had offered.

From 40 to 500 borrowers

Because of the quick one- to two-day release of loaned amounts, the roster of regular borrowers had grown from 40 a decade ago to about 500 to date. OFWs from as far as Baguio, La Union, Cebu, Davao, and Basel, have marveled to the company's main office in Makati City just to avail of the loan facility, she said.

"A lot of OFWs get personal loans to buy their airplane tickets, to use it as pocket money to build or repair their houses, or at times to leave as allowance for their families here," she said. Her clients usually borrow anywhere between P15,000 and P300,000. They can loan a bigger amount if the need arises, she said.

Sadly, there are instances where people would borrow and use it as "grease money" for some recruitment agencies supposedly to speed up document processing, Isabel told the business.

Explain bigger picture

But more than just business, Isabel and her team who process OFWs by tipping them off with any irregularities they may notice regarding their employment visas and job descriptions.

Once, a woman was about to loan money to pay her recruitment agency in exchange for a job as an apple picker in the Middle East, she revealed.

Knowing that the job was uncommon in that part of the world, Isabel advised the woman to first check the status of the recruitment firm with the Philippine Overseas Employment Agency before pushing through with borrowing. Fortunately enough, the recruitment agency turned out to be illegal and the job offer bogus, she said.

"That's why we really talk with our borrowers, to get to know them more and assist them in any way possible," she said. Isabel said her company also conducts pre-departure seminars to orientate the OFWs the bigger picture of their flight abroad and how greatly they contribute to the Philippine economy.

"We want to change their mindset," Isabel said. "We want them to realize that what they go out of the country, they become the best ambassadors of the country."

It's a good thing that that the company prides itself with courteous and friendly staff who treat OFWs with utmost respect and importance. "They're already tired from their work abroad so when they come here, we make sure they feel comfortable and at home," the businesswoman added.

Quality of life

This is the reason, she believes, for the firm's low incidence of delinquent transactions—only only less than 20 percent delayed or non-payment. Discussing small OFW payers who make good their promises to pay on time, she said.

After 18 years of lending, Isabel had seen a lot of OFWs prosper and improve their quality of life. There were those who moved on to other office clutching plastic bags but who would now dress up well-dressed, carrying Louis Vuitton bags.

"I believe working abroad is a positive experience, a concrete factor to parental growth," she said.

Ultimately, Isabel said she wants OFWs to retire in the country after earning their keep abroad.

Thankfully, their efforts had not gone unnoticed. "People would write letters full of gratitude and nice words. Some send text messages thanking us for our help," she said.

At times, vacationing OFW borrowers would even visit and bring food for them. "It's a wonderful feeling to help," she said. After all, I don't want this lending company to be known as a money-making machine, but an institution who helped people," Isabel said.

When applying for a US visa, do it right the first time

IMFO
Lourdes Yambot Tancinco

MANOLO JUST GRADUATED from a prestigious school in Manila when he decided to go to the United States. A cousin introduced him to a travel agent who offered to sell him a Philippine passport with a US visa stamped on it. Manolo paid a significant amount for this fraudulent passport and visa and used the same to enter the US in 2000. The travel papers were called his real identity.

Upon arrival in the US, the relatives of Manolo welcomed him to their home temporarily until he met his would-be wife, Mena, a US citizen. Manolo married Mena in 2000 and the latter filed a petition for an immigrant visa on behalf of Manolo. During the interview, the immigration officer discovered that he had used a fraudulent passport to enter the US. The application for immigrant visa was denied.

In 2007, Manolo was placed in removal/deportation proceedings and was asked to appear before the immigration judge for a hearing. In the meantime, Manolo's father who had been previously ill passed away in January 2008. Manolo was not able to return to the Philippines because he did not have the proper immigration documentation. Will Manolo still be able to get his immigrant visa and be a legal US resident?

Crime does not pay

Obtaining a US visa involves a complex process depending on what type of visa one is applying for. The most common kind of non-immigrant visas are the visitor visas, the student visas and fiancé visas.

And for immigrant visas, petitions by US citizen parents on behalf of their minor children is one of the fastest way to obtain an immigrant visa. The minor children of US citizens and permanent residents are considered immediate relatives.

The list of valid jobs for work visa studies, he said.

He applied for a job at the two most popular bar-food chains, but he was rejected because he had poor facility in English.

Suicide thoughts

"It was so difficult that I went to commit suicide," he said. "I was the only problematic who gave to Manila and ends up with nothing. No wonder many people end up as vagabonds or hold-up men, I thought then."

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Comments may be reached at lourdes@tancinco.com or at 632-867-7077)

The waiver application is accomplished in the form I-601 and it is filed either at the Citizenship and Immigration Service or the US consulate depending on where the applicant is residing.

Waiver, extreme hardship

To have the waiver approved, the applicant must have a qualifying relative who is a US citizen or permanent resident spouse or parent. After identifying the qualifying relative, the "extreme hardship" test begins and it does to what an applicant has to establish qualifying relative would suffer extreme hardship if the waiver is denied and the applicant is deported to his homeland.

The waiver shall be adjudicated based on varying factors to include emotional, physical and economic hardship to the qualifying relatives. If the waiver is granted, the applicant receives the immigrant visa.

On the other hand, if the applicant's waiver is denied, he will be placed in removal proceedings. If the applicant has already had his removal application for waiver, the applicant shall be ordered deported or removed from the US. Once deported, he will suffer the harsh penalty of separation from the applicant's family.

Considering the heightened standards of granting "extreme hardship" in waiver applications, it will be more prudent not to get involved in any fraudulent scheme to enter the US. While waivers are allowed, the circumstances of each case may be different from one another and the grant of the waiver will be difficult especially for those with no sufficient ties in the US.

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Ibarra

Iraq approves execution of 'Chemical Ali'

BAGHDAD—IRAQI LEADERS say they have found a way to execute Ali Hassan al-Majid, known as "Chemical Ali" and formerly one of Saddam Hussein's most notorious henchmen.

Al-Majid was sentenced to death last June, but approval of his execution follows months of struggling with a legal quandary that seemed to mean that his hanging would also lead to the gallows a respected former general whose execution was opposed by several Iraqi leaders and US commanders.

Al-Majid will be turned over by his American jailers and executed shortly, according to officials from Iraq's presidency council, which has the power to ratify death sentences.

"The presidential council drove to execute Ali Hassan al-Majid was approved," said Latifa Ibrahim, an aide to Vice President Adil Abdul Mahdi.

The Presidency Council, which had blocked the execution because of the case's legal complications, consists of Mahdi, a Shiite, Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi, a Sunni, and President Jalal Talabani, a Kurd.

No one within the senior ranks of the Iraqi or US governments had sought to spare Chemical Ali. He led the Anfal operations in the 1980s that killed as many as 180,000 Kurds.

But for some Iraqi and US officials, the problem was that his case, and his fate, was tied to that of the suspected former general, Saddam Hussein Ahmed al-Jaboori al-Tai, a Sunni and former defense minister, who was also sentenced to death at the same time. AFP

ALI Hassan al-Majid

40 killed in Pakistan suicide blast

ISLAMABAD—A SUICIDE BOMBER KILLED AT least 40 people at a funeral of a policeman in the Swat district of Pakistan, days after the Pakistan army said it had begun to bring the mountainous region under control.

Another suicide bomber rammed his car into a vehicle carrying paramilitary forces in the northwestern tribal region on Saturday, killing nine civilians and wounding 17 others, including nine troops.

Deputy Superintendent Kammal Shah, who was among more than 500 mourners at the Swat funeral, said the bomber attacked on Friday after people had offered prayers for the policeman, one of three killed earlier in the day by a roadside bomb.

"Full houses were serving the office for a police officer," he said. Intelligence officials said at least 30 people were killed and a local station said more than 45 were wounded.

Earlier this week the Pakistan army, which has been battling Islamist militants in the West region of northwest Pakistan for months, said it had cleared most areas aside from a few pockets of resistance.

The attack on the funeral was part of an upsurge in violence that has raised concern about the stability of Pakistan, less than two weeks after an election meant to bring the country back on stable footing democratically.

On Monday, the army's top medical officer was killed by a suicide bomber in the city of Rawalpindi. He was the latest senior officer killed so far.

In Swat, 34 bodies were received in hospital and more than 50 people were being treated for wounds after the attack on the funeral, said senior doctor Mohammad Ghafar.

Mahdi said he also saw people carrying bodies of relatives home to prepare them for burial.

The policeman being buried was one of three killed earlier on Friday when their van struck a roadside bomb in another region of North West Frontier Province, where Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters are active.

The bomb—exploded near Bannu, a town at the gateway to North Waziristan, a tribal region where al-Qaeda cells have become entrenched.

Saturday's attack occurred some 5 km west of Mingora town in Swat, the most recent casualty of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous tribal regions and known as a safe haven for al-Qaeda-linked militants. Reuters

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WORLD BRIEFS

Israel kills 22 Palestinians in Gaza raid

GAZA—Israeli forces killed 22 Palestinians in the Hamas-led Gaza Strip on Saturday in the most intense fighting in weeks and Israel threatened a broader offensive to stop rocket fire. A total of 51 Palestinians have been killed in four days of Israeli raids and air strikes in the Gaza Strip that the Jewish state launched after crimes border workers killed an Israeli man on Wednesday and lashed deep into a southern city. Of the 22 killed on Saturday, 11 were civilians and the rest militants, according to hospital staff and the Islamist Hamas movement, which seized control of Gaza last June after beating the more secular forces of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Witnesses said fighting erupted after Israeli soldiers, backed by helicopter gunships, entered northern Gaza by land were ambushed by Palestinian gunmen. Reuters

Prince Harry flown back after cover blown

LONDON—Prince Harry was on his way back to Britain on Saturday after news of his 10-week tour of Afghanistan was leaked by foreign media, the defense ministry in London confirmed. The 23-year-old royal, a junior officer in the Household Cavalry, was packed in mid-December to the creative moment's presence in southern Afghanistan, where British forces are fighting Taliban insurgents. His ty's deploy round to the warzone country made him the first British royal to be sent into combat in more than a quarter of a century—his uncle, Prince Andrew, served as a naval helicopter pilot during the 1982 Falklands War. He was deployed under a cloak of secrecy following an unusual news blackout deal between the media and the army. But the arrangement collapsed Thursday after news was leaked on the US website, The Drudge Report, which gained notoriety by revealing details of then US president Bill Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky. AFP

Obama won't keep US children safe—Clinton ad

HOUSTON, Texas—Democrat Hillary Clinton aired a fresh hitting advertisement on Friday suggesting that her White House rival Barack Obama was too inexperienced to protect US children in a crisis. Obama hit back at the television spot, which parallels said brought to mind one of the most notorious ads of the Cold War, by insisting that Clinton had betrayed a critical lack of judgment in voting for the Iraq war. The controversial Clinton ad, which started airing in Texas ahead of crucial primaries on Tuesday, features the innocent sound of a telephone ringing over images of a sleeping girl appearing soundly in her bed. "It's 3 a.m. and your children are safe and asleep. But there's a phone in the White House and it's ringing." The radio narrator says. "Something's happening in the world. Your vote will decide who answers that call. "The ad never mentions Obama by name, but the implication is clear that he is too inexperienced to cope with a dangerous crisis, and ends by showing Clinton in two-time like speeches answering the phone. AFP

Turkey withdraws troops from northern Iraq

ANKARA—Turkey pulled its troops out of northern Iraq on Friday, ending a major offensive against Kurdish PKK rebels that Washington had feared might destabilize the wider region. The withdrawal came a day after US President George W. Bush urged a swift end to the offensive. Turkey's armed forces General Staff denied any foreign influence on the decision. "There was no question of complying, negotiating with any international organization, but Turkey has shown the organizations that northern Iraq is not a safe haven for them," the General Staff said in a statement. Turkey, which has Nato's second biggest army, sent thousands of soldiers into mountainous northern Iraq on Feb. 21 to crush rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who use the region as a base for attacks on Turkish territory. The General Staff said it had killed 240 rebels and lost 27 soldiers during the eight-day offensive, waged in deep snow and subzero temperatures through mountainous terrain. Reuters

Sunday SPORTS

WILLIAMS: Ex-ua snapped

WHAT'S INSIDE
Rockets run streak to 14; Celtics score /A28

Final showdown today

Realtors, Giants play for all the marbles in Game 7

By Mueng R. Castillo

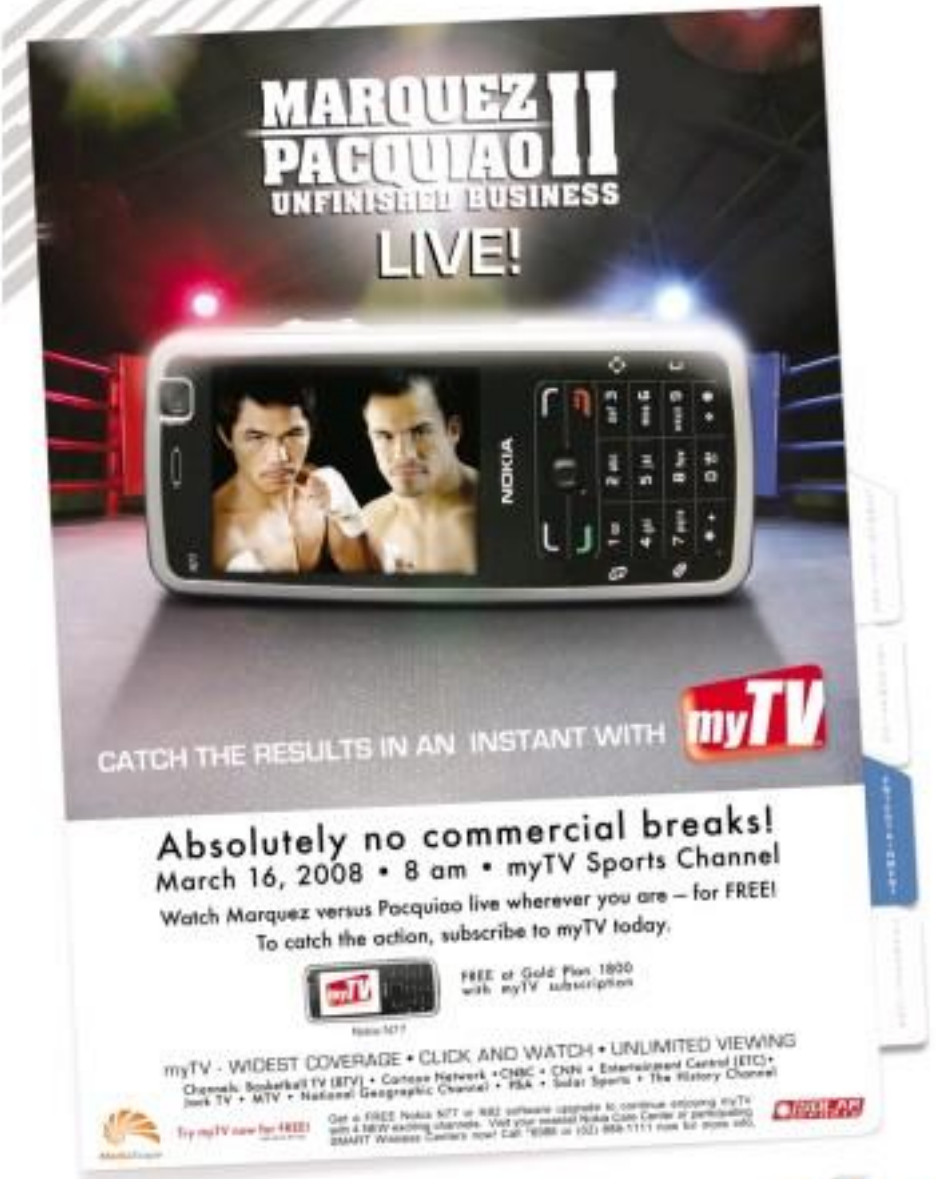
ONE LAST GAME, NO MORE TOMORROWS.

Sta. Lucia and Purefoods will put an end to a classic series that has had its share of off-court drama when they clash today in Game 7 of the Smart PBA Philippine Cup series at the Araneta Coliseum.

The series has provided soap opera-like subplots for all the fans to see and read with players, team managers, board members, technical drills and even the commissioner all involved in a title playoff to remember.

But from 6:30 tonight, the finalists and the Under Jerry Giants will dug it out for the most coveted crown of all.

FINAL /A28



Burger takes Nokia youth to school

GAME Marrooned soars for a dunk

By Jeanina M. Poyo

LOOKS LIKE THE NOKIA PHILIPPINE South team will be in for a tough time next PBL guest squad.

Budget King became the first team to touch the national juniors squad a one basketball lesson, hammering out an 83-61 victory yesterday in the Limestone Amino Sports Cup yesterday at The Arena in San Juan.

And that's exactly what Jhun Punzalan requires this phase of the season to improve.

A harsh reality check.

"It's a positive note, we played much better compared to our previous practice games," said Punzalan. "But we still have a lot of work to do. It's a confidence-booster for the kids. We played against taller, physical and more mature players, but down the road, our games in the PBL will be handled on our own."

"The talent is there, but their stamina needs improvement," said Ginger coach Allan Giorgetti.

In the second game, Hapee mercury a near-upset as Black Barbosan batted a single-with four seconds remaining to lift the Complete Protectors past the Steelers Raiders, 85-83.

Before Barbosan's heroics, 6'4-tire Gabe Norwood drilled 12 of his 21 points in the final five minutes to keep the Pioneers in the thick of the fight.

"They were sharp (in the dying seconds)," said coach Louie Alas of his Gonzales Protectors, who joined Hapee Cement on top at 2-0.

Pharex pulled off a stunner in the third game with a 98-76 rout of Toyota City to grab a share of the lead.

The scores

FIRST GAME

BURGER KING (83) — Flores 17, Dario 8, Mendoza 6, Andaya 7, Bravo 6, Aquino 6, Cardoza 3, Santos 2, Bautista 2, Ilao 0, Lingcong 0, Lim 0, Tan 0, Ong 0, Ong 0, Ong

Sotto sings national anthem in Pacman tiff

By Roy Luarca

THE JACQUIAO-MARQUEZ II promoter-turned-ballad-crooner with HBO Sports presenting a 20-minute special and Gloria Sorra being selected to sing the Philippine national anthem on fight night.

To be beamed worldwide via pay-per-view, the super featherweight bantle between Filipino challenger Manny Pacquiao and Mexican World Boxing Council champion Juan Manuel Marquez is slated March 15 at the Mandalay Bay Resort & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Dubbed "Countdown to Marquez-Pacquiao II," the special will feature fighter profiles, expert analysis and lasting buzz-cuts on Saturday, Sunday in Manila following the HBO Boxing Championship Boxing telecast that airs live at 6:30 p.m.

Sotto is an actress and singer. A product of the 12th anniversary of Manic, she comes from a prominent show biz family being the daughter of actress Helen Gamboa and comedian and former Sen. Tito Sotto. Mr. Sotto is her uncle while Eleanor Gamboa is her cousin.

Gloria will join the ranks of Lani Misalucha, Rivale Escalante, Sarah Geronimo, Jennifer Bautista, Geneva Cruz and Rylie, who have all sung the national anthem in Pacquiao's fights.

In their first encounter for the featherweight title on May 8, 2004, Dinyadas decked Marquez three times in the first round only to see the ref in controversial majority draw.

This time, Pacquiao, who's been training at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Hollywood, is aiming for a convincing win that will complete his annihilation of great Mexican fighters, including many time world champions Erik Morales and Marco Antonio Barrera.

Marquez, whose daily regimen includes jogging at the Tehran mountains and running at the Estadio Olin in Mexico City, is determined to beat Pacquiao and get the same recognition accorded to Morales and Barrera back home.

The co-promoters – Bob Arum's Top Rank and Oscar De La Hoya's Golden Boy Promotions – have prepared great undercours for Pacquiao and Marquez, who'll be sporting 30 ounces apart, on March 13 at the Mandalay Bay.

Canlubang seals victory, equals margin record

By Ernesto Gonzales

BACOLOD—CANLUBANG COOLED off with its prime goods already unloaded and settled for a piece of the record for the most lopsided win Saturday to cap its dominance of the 43rd PAL Interclub golf championship here.

With a pressure-free final round output of 220, Canlubang outshed the 34-point margin of victory set by Luisita over another Canlubang squad in the same Marapara course of the Negros Occidental Golf and Country Club in 1992.

The defending champion team from Laguna finished with a four-round total of 534 to the 500 of Manila Southwoods. Del Monte wound up third with 490.

"Winning is always a thrill. But do not want to stop winning," said team Leigh Valeo of Canlubang which raised its leading collection of tournament titles to 15 while completing its first Senior Men's championship treble.

A team insider dubbed Canlubang, which set last year the record of 572 for the highest winning score since the five-to-play four-to-count format was introduced in 1978, also registered new standards for the biggest lead after the second round (24) and third round (31).

To underscore Canlubang's balanced strength, national team members Harold Medina produced 221 points which teammate Paul Echarri matched. Another 80 team regular Mark Fernando contributed 32 and rookies Jose Villaber and Jonie Balsamo each had 31.

Gone from the 35 that paced Southwoods' 126 preliminaries for the day were Echarri and Villaber who led the solo record for the biggest win. He was supported by Barones Jr. less than (32) and veterans Justine Uytiap and Charlie Hong with identical 30 scores.

The day's top scorer proved to be Jet Dino of Del Monte, who came up with a one-under par 69 worth 37 points on a course that played tougher and tougher as a heavy downpour Friday night.

Korean Park Jun-suh made 33 but team captain Hyung Yeke added only 20 and John Bautista a 24 to give the Manolo Pedrik, Baldoven team, the first champion squad from Mindanao in 2004, a 123-aggregate for the day.

"Definitely we're getting new talents every year," said Interclub skipper Thedy Tinsay as he promised a younger stand from his boys to the 42nd edition to be held in Davao with at least four refreshments from the ICTSI golf program under former national coach Hong Lopez.

With Bacolos declined to identify the prospects, the race likely subtitles are Switzland Aunes and Dante Herrera.

Mario Lobaja later picked up another award for Canlubang by topping the 36-hole individual race to his last year by the fourteen. Already pushing 57, he is set to turn pro after the tournament.

But Tommy Manotoc, who spurred Canlubang's earlier 20-point victory in the Senior's last week, said there are more talents being developed and trained under his Philippine Amateur Golf Development Foundation and supported by the club, who are ready to take Lobaja's place.

Primitz Gatson, who led that 1-under scoring splurge to finish with the top individual award for 36 and 36 holes, was also the overnight amateur beneficiary as he helped Negros win the Founders division title with 456.

The tournament has Arbes, Manila Peninsular, El Nidolan MIT's Philippines and Solar Sports as platinum sponsors with Arbes Inn, Business Metro 101.3 Crossover, Passports and Pool Caribbean as major sponsors.

Fellow Mexico Goan, MasterCard, Pearl Insurance and SBM are the corporate sponsors while Gonzo Suites, Gilberry Golf, Century Park Hotel, Lafftime Tactical and Palm Brewing are the event sponsors.

THE CANLUBANG give Zonny Boy Glutan (cap) the honors of the victory ride.

Bustamante lone RP Guinness survivor

TAIPEI—RISING FILIPINO STAR JOVEN Bustamante booted Malaysian Ezekiah Mc Andy, 9-8, on Saturday to barge into the semifinals and become the lone Filipino survivor to the kickoff leg of the 2009 Guinness 9-Ball Tour on the Taipei Qualifiers.

Doha Asian Games silver medalist Jeffrey de Luna crushed out after yielding to reigning World Junior champion Ko Pin-yi, 9-3, at bowse in another quarterfinals match.

Other Filipinos who failed to advance in the preliminaries group stage held Friday were 2004 world champion Alex Pagulayan, Marlon Manalo and Antonio Gabica.

The 60-year-old Asian, a native of Iloilo, Iloilo, who's now a resident of Kuala Lumpur, fell prey to errors early in the game, allowing Bustamante, 20, to take a commanding 5-1 lead.

Joven managed to come to within 5-3 after Bustamante misstroked a jump shot on the yellow ball in the seventh rack, but trembled when he missed a point break attempt on the nine-ball. Bustamante took the game rack and followed up with a break and run out for a 7-3 edge.

Joven again clawed to within 6-8, but a scratch on the seven ball spelled doom for him as Bustamante this allowed Bustamante to seal the outcome.

De Luna fouled on the game six per attempt in the last rack followed by another error off the break in the second, allowing Ko to race ahead, 3-1.

Gaining his nerves, De Luna battled back, running out the ninth frame and capturing on a misplayed jump attempt by Ko on the pink four at the seventh rack to knot things at 3-3.

In the tenth rack, controversy threatened to ruin the flow of competition when a referee called a foul on a De Luna push out. Though, the replays seemed to show otherwise, the referee's decision was considered final.

De Luna chose not to protest the call, but never found his rhythm against the 18-year-old Ko.

In the third quarterfinals contest, Yang Ching-Shun beat compatriot Wu Chia-ching, 9-7, in arranges a showdown with the winner of the match between 2007 Tour Grand Finals champion Chang Jung-lin and Japanese Satoshi Kawabata later in the day.

Marvilen Fernandez, Contributor

MARK Bumgarner gets ready to start the race.

Bumgarner rules US Barbers race

MARK BUMGARNER, THE 17-year-old younger brother of former Asian karting champion Michelle, unveiled a big blast as he swept both races up against the best in rally the Spontaneous Oasis Group 4 recently in the Skip Barber's Western Regional Series in Sebring, Florida.

He has not driven a Skip Barber Formula Car in an actual race car tried the track before. But Mark handed on his years of experience in karting to 'hack the obstacles and win the events.

Moreover, he prevailed over 18 tough opponents across the Pitot Coast and proved that Filipino drivers are equally competitive against other drivers in the US or wherever.

Mark posted the fastest time of 2:29 with a top speed of 80.396 miles per hour to sweep up the nine-lap race to 22 minutes and 31.365 seconds.

Bumgarner built a 8.925 second margin at the end of the race against runner-up Shawnik Burdett, who clocked 22:39.750 while Ben Bristow secured up third with 22:40.291.

In race two, he hit a top speed of 89.262 miles per hour with a 2-lap race lapping 21:29.

"While the country's Bagio rested, mostly did my best," he said.

No. 1 Ochoa grabs 8-stroke HSBC lead

SINGAPORE—WORLD NO. 1 LORENA Ochoa took a grip on the HSBC Women's Champions title, living Dow Jones on Saturday to extend her lead to eight strokes.

The Mexican ace, an eight-time winner in 2007, shot a 3-under 69 for a 36-under total, posting her eight stroke clear of Paula Creamer and Aunika Sorenstam in shared second, with Karrie Webb a stroke further back going into the final round.

Despite posting the best score of the day, Ochoa said her round was more difficult than usual.

"It was a tough day today, it started in the morning with some rain and I didn't feel as good a rhythm as I had the first few days so it was difficult for me out there," Ochoa said.

She struggled to adjust to the speed of the rain-soaked greens.

On Sunday, Ochoa will be teeing up against the winners of the first two commercials of the season – Creamer of the U.S., who won the Fields Open last weekend and Sweden's Sorenstam, the HSBC Open champion.

Creamer shot four-birdies and two bogeys for a 2-under 70 to finish at 8-under with Sorenstam, the former world No. 1, who took five birdies.

AP

Jelik, Pong upstage Subic Centennial

JELIK, HELMED BY SERVER HOME Pong, struck a big on high seas and completed the 6th Manila to Boracay Regatta in 20 hours and 12 seconds to bag the overall crown recently.

Commodore Tyrone Ralew presented the overall champion trophy to Pong at the awards night held with the prestigious Ballet Island Trophy presented by David McKenzie, while Jelik was given the Live Honor Award, a special trophy presented by Jules Rebaza.

Subic Centennial, skippered by Rebaza, topped the women age-bracket in 39 hours, 39 minutes, and 20 seconds while Ramilon, skippered by Ray Dizon-ess, took third place with a time of 39 hours, 23 minutes, and 49 seconds.

Jelik and Pong also bagged the title in the Samsung Digital Camera DIC Racing Division presented by Standard Insurance senior vice-president Sheila Sicam.

Subic Centennial, skippered by Ernesto Salazar and Tom Heffernan, again clinched in second while Ramilon and skipper Ray Ordoveza claimed third place.

The BIC Cruiser Racer Division trophy, presented by Cecile Gregorio of Smart Infinity, went to Selina Ilao skippered by Jun Arevillo as it posted over runner-up Challenge skippered by Martin Benevoval third place Sundowner Boat Jetsprit.

The PY Division prize, awarded by Jig Reyes of Cisco Systems, was claimed by Chino Roxs skippered by Rainer Hahn who powered the victory over Bahagiat and third place Sayonara XIX skippered by David McKinna.

The event was supported by Cisco, Samsung Digital Camera, San Miguel Super Dry Beer, Fort Global City, Golden Moon Acuire, Calibre Magazine, Concrete 105.1 and Dream FM.

MEMBERS and supporters of Jelik celebrate the triumph

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E-mail:pi_sports@inquirer.com.ph
Editor Teddyboy S. Molmisa

Yao injury crowds Yi's thoughts

NEW YORK—THE OLYMPICS WILL be the biggest thing to ever happen to Chinese sports. Right now, Yi Jianlian isn't ready to think about them.

Not so soon after the injury to Yao Ming, which could rule the host country's hopes of showing how much it has improved in basketball.

"The Olympics is more than five months away right now, so I haven't really thought too much about that," Yi, the Milwaukee Bucks rookie forward, said on Thursday through a translator. "But I'm really hoping that Yao Ming can get better before the Olympics and participate in that. But he has a lot of time right now."

Yao will miss the rest of the NBA season with a stress fracture in his left foot. An expected recovery time of about four months would have the Houston Rockets center ready for the Beijing Olympics, which begin on Aug. 8.

"He just said that I've got to watch out for my own physical conditions in the future," Yi said. AP

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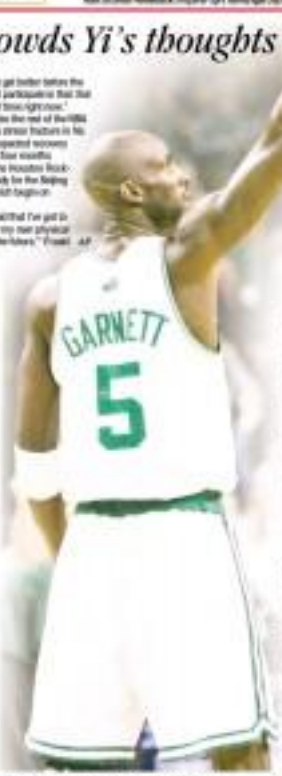


KEVIN Garnett acknowledges the crowd's cheers.

Rockets run streak to 14; Celtics score

Paul powers Hornets past Jazz

HOUSTON—TRACY MCGRADY HAD 25 POINTS AND SIX ASSISTS, AND THE HOUSTON Rockets beat the Memphis Grizzlies 116-95 on Friday to extend their winning streak to 14, the longest streak in the NBA this season.

They are one shy of the longest winning streak in franchise history, matched twice, with the last time coming in their championship season of 1993-94.

The Grizzlies have lost seven straight.

The Rockets started Dikembe Mutombo in place of the injured Juwan Howard and also used Carl Landry and Luis Scola. Mutombo finished with 13 rebounds and four points in 19 minutes, while Scola and Landry had 13 points apiece.

In New Orleans, Chris Paul had 24 points and 16 assists to propel the New Orleans Hornets to a 113-98 home win over the Utah Jazz on Friday.

A 36-point first quarter to which Paul scored 12 points gave the Hornets a lead they never lost.

"I saw a very aggressive basketball team right from the start," Hornets coach Byron Scott told reporters. "I don't know if you can keep up that aggressiveness and intensity for 48 minutes, but for that 12 minutes it was really outstanding."

David West added 23 points and 12 rebounds and Peja Stojakovic contributed 20 points for the Hornets.

Mehmet Okur led Utah with 27 points, rallied to within 89-84 with 8:09 remaining in the game but New Orleans then threw a 17-9 run at the Jazz to win it 106-93 with 2:22 left.

"They (the Hornets) were the aggressor all night long," said Jazz coach Jerry Sloan. "When you're not ready to attack them, you can't expect to win."

In Dallas, Jason Kidd, benched for the final 31 seconds of a pivotal game the previous night in part because he was reluctant to shoot, scored a season-high 21 points and was an unstoppable force in the Dallas Mavericks' 109-96 victory over the Golden State Warriors.

Kidd grabbed 11 rebounds, dished seven assists and connected on 8-of-16 shots from the field, including 3-of-5 from 3-point range. Jason Terry added 20 points and Josh Howard had 19 points and 10 rebounds for the Mavericks, who have won seven of their last eight games.

Monta Ellis led Golden State with 25 points, while Stephen Jackson had 24 points and Al Harrington added 20 points and 10 rebounds.

Kidd, who was benched for the final 31 seconds of Thursday's 107-104 loss to Phoenix, was back in the starting lineup against Golden State and made his presence felt early.

He scored 10 points in the first quarter, including a 3-pointer that gave Dallas a 30-24 lead with 1:08 left in the period. The Mavericks never trailed after that.

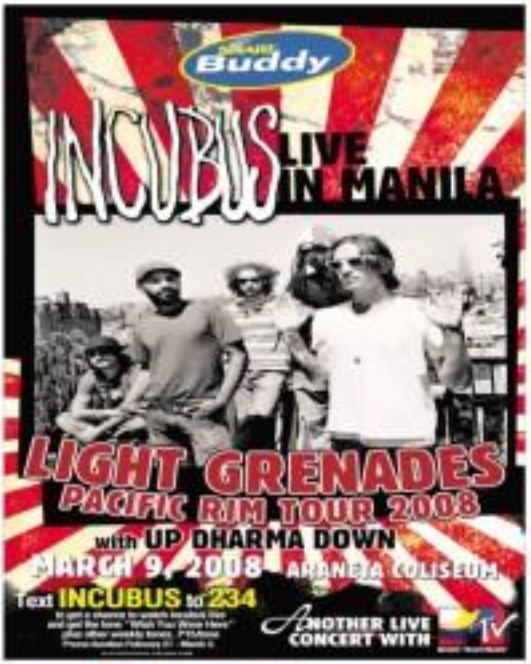
Dallas shot 54 percent from the field and 50 percent from 3-point range in the first quarter, when it built a 34-point lead.

Golden State shot 50 percent from the field in the second quarter, but the Mavericks still led 63-49 at the half.

Dallas shot 60 percent from the field in the third quarter and led by as many as 20 points before Golden State closed to within 92-83 on Jackson's 3-pointer with 8:09 left in the game.

Dallas then scored seven straight points to push the lead back to 16 and the Warriors never got closer than 11 the rest of the way.

Jason Kidd of the Dallas Mavericks drives to the basket against Golden State Warriors' Monta Ellis during the first quarter of their NBA basketball game in Dallas, Texas, March 1, 2008. REUTERS



GALLANT STAND THE Philippines' Sarah Gordon (right) unleashes a left straight against Emma of WBA Strawweight World Champion Sut Kaothian. Gordon, garbed in the national colors, attempted to knock the crown off the defending champion during their WBA and WIBF World Championship boxing match Friday night in Hamburg. Her efforts, though, were for naught as Kaothian eventually won the fight in the third round by technical knockout. RACHEL

Espinosa to return at last, will grace Elorde awards

FORMER WORLD BOXING ASSOCIATION featherweight and World Boxing Council featherweight champion Lolito Espinosa is finally coming back home.

Espinosa is slated to return on March 22 to receive a long-overdue award as world boxing champion in the 80s Gabriel "Flash" Elorde Awards Night on March 22 at the Greenmead Hall of the Manila Hotel.

After a 13-year stay in the United States, Espinosa was invited to come home by promoter Johnny Elorde when they met in San Francisco, California, last December.

Espinosa, who won in his WBC featherweight title defense against Carlos Zilm of Argentina in 1987 in Ravenswil, South Carolina, will be honored as a former world and international boxing champion during the Banquet of Champions.

Espinosa, 45, is one of only four PIs (three to have won titles in two different divisions, a list that includes brothers Gerry and Dodie Boy Peñalosa and Manny Pacquiao.

Espinosa will join an elite roster of former and current world champions in the Flash Elorde Banquet of Champions, which will be held during the birth anniversary of Flash Elorde, world junior champion from 1960 to 1967 and the second Filipino boxer inducted into the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Highlight of the event is the induction of boxing superstar Manny Pacquiao into the Elorde Boxing Hall of Fame.

Other boxers of the year to be honored by the Elorde family are International Boxing Federation flyweight champion Nonito Donaire Jr., World Boxing Organization bantamweight titleholder Gerry Peñalosa, IBF minimumweight titlist Florante Cordero and WBO minimumweight king Ivan Meralles.

Website: www.inquirer.net/business

Sunday BIZ

Business Features Editor Margie Quimpo-Espino

As a top exec, what advice can you give GMA?

By Margie Quimpo-Espino and Tina Arceo-Dumlao

THE PRESIDENT OF A DEVELOPING country is sometimes referred to as the CEO of the land. The point being, the main concern of that country would be economic development and, therefore, you need a chief executive officer to propel it to economic success.

But what does a chief executive do in the middle of a crisis such like the one President Macapagal-Arroyo is currently facing? Although the alleged bribery accusations hurled against her and her husband will not hold water in court, many have already branded her as guilty relying purely on a man who himself has admitted to being a corrupt government official.

We asked company executives what advice they can give GMA:

CUNA

Tell the truth

"Tell the truth."—Ben-jamin Limcon, The Generics Pharmacy

Truth prevails

"Eventually truth prevails and certain all of us love."—Andy Gaerlan, president, Kenk Group Philippines Inc.

"I think she is in a hopeless situation. I can't think of advice that can change that."—Ahmad Nygmet, chief, Shell's Cmg.

"Keep doing your reforms done as President of the Republic. Encourage the many senators, the Lakas and Gray to pursue their agenda with the courts. And let not any extraconstitutional disruption of the presidency happen again. Do not resign."—Rafael dela Rama, CEO, Chemking

"If I were GMA, I would not resign. I would not resign on bestiay that the Senate has been pursuing. By now, the Senate should have had many more witness based on the numerous investigations that have investigated. Hearsay cannot be taken as gospel truth. I would do my own investigation and if I find out that one of my people is guilty, the rule of law should be respected and followed. Unfortunately, she can refer to Dan Anderson or go to courts as we cannot announce in jail, not tried by Senate and media. We must protect our civil rights."—Victor Fuellenzarge, Philippine Bank Exchange

"Its practice and live good governance rather than just pay lip service to it!"—Jose L. Cuisia, president, Philam Life

CUISIA

Be more transparent

"Listen to those who have the other agenda then the good of the country and the people; implement needed reforms in governance and the bureaucracy, and, from now on, be more transparent and try to do only what is good for the country and the people."—Felipe Gozon, president, GMA Network

Resist the truth

"In a crisis situation, it is crucial that the leader (or CEO) come up to, admit the problem, states the truth or facts, gives the cause of the problems and announces the action plans (immediate, medium and long term) that address the problem and how it can be avoided in the future. It is important that the leader be in control and appear in control. Unfortunately for us, our president is not doing these fundamentals in crisis management. And the obvious scenarios, half truths and outright lies of her people are adding fuel to the fire."—Ben C. Dalton II, chief operating officer, Ortigas and Co.

Let truth prevail

"The business sector is again at a crossroads and in a wait-and-see scenario—speculating what will happen next with these controversies. As for President Arroyo, she should let the truth prevail no matter what it takes. She can make Philippine history change with her very hands."—Bienvenido Oreta, president of Hourglass and officer of the Association of Philippine Franchise Inc.

DIZON

BAUTISTA

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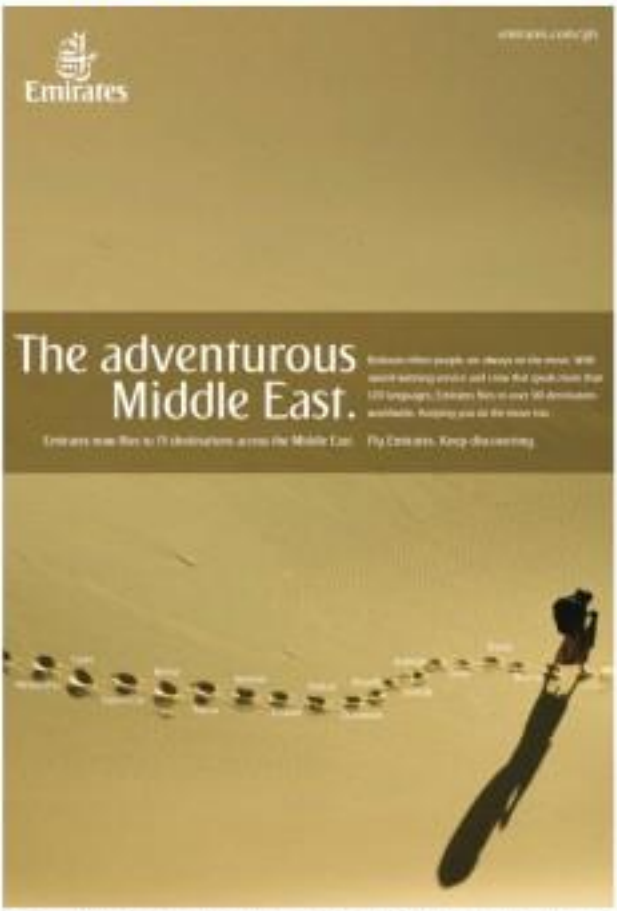

FEATURES IN BRIEF

Why banks need the writ of habeas data

BSA/AML banks in the conduct of their business must reasonably gather, collect and store personal data or information they are mandated or being bullied to court under the new rule of habeas data. Anyone who was not granted a loan, or who was denied a credit card, or whose deposit was not accepted, or just about anybody who has felt aggrieved by a bank's refusal to do business on account of wrong or inaccurate data or information about him may go to court and demand that the bank rectify its data.

To help banks face the eventuality of becoming respondents or petitioners for the writ of habeas data, the Romulo law office has organized a roundtable discussion for bankers, particularly compliance officers, bancassurance, trust administrators, on the implications of the new rule on habeas data on banks and banking. The roundtable discussion will be held on March 5 from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the Top of the 23B, 20th Floor, Chatham Tower.

Main speaker is Court of Appeals Justice Rosmari Carandang who before serving in the judiciary worked with the legal department of Far East Bank and Trust Co. He will discuss how the new writ complements the writs of amparo and of habeas corpus in protecting the security and privacy of citizens and will explain how banks can defend themselves against unwarranted petitions.

Lawyer Simone S. Capule, deputy general counsel of the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas, will discuss issues with current banking law and regulations, such as the know-your-client requirements, will be affected by the availability of the writ to disgruntled clients.

From the private sector, lawyer Antonio V. Viray, special counsel and formerly senior vice president-general counsel of BMI-Ayala, will explore the implications on retail banking practice; lawyer Ma. Cristina Barbara Concepcion, head of the legal and administrative unit of trust banking at Banco de Oro Universal Bank will focus on the effect of the writ on trust administration and operations; and lawyer Federico P. Tan Congco, vice president and head of legal and compliance of BDO Private Bank will talk on effects to the handling of private banking clients.

Lawyers attending the roundtable discussion are expected to be granted MCLE credits for their participation. For queries, call 845-2114 or 813-6138.

Learn to make soap and balloon decors

TMC ART of dressing up parties has become a lucrative business for a growing number of Filipinos.

The six-town professional balloon designing and entertainer seminar is underwriting business.

The Golden Treasure Skills and Development Program will conduct a one-day seminar on balloon-making to be held at the Belmont Rooms (situated at 8 Annapolis Road, Project 3, Quezon City on March 8, Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Among the topics to be discussed are sculpting of materials, cooling, proper inflating, folding, printing, etc. Participants will also be taught how to make balloons for all occasions such as pillar, tuftani, centerpiece, balloons for bubble parties, balloon bunch, balloon inside the balloon, etc.

The following day, March 9, Sunday, Golden Treasure will conduct a one-day seminar on soap-making to be held at the College of Social Work and Community Development, Magsaysay Avenue corner Pasaar Street, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are melting and pouring and rolling.

Participants will be taught how to make liquid dishwashing soap, hair and hand soap, liquid all-purpose soap, bar detergent soap, powder soap, herbal bath soap (papaya, kalamansi, cucumber, oatmeal, etc.), and glycerin cream/pearl bath soaps.

Bonus courses include making liquid bleach, fabric softener, tile and bowl cleaner, glass cleaner, air freshener, car shampoo, tire black, and processing virgin coconut oil for soap.

Participants will receive certificate of training right after the seminar. Lunch and snacks will be served. Handouts and all materials will be provided.

For questions, call 434-7826, 913-65-51, 421-76-71, and 433-64-13.

Review for realty brokers reset

GPBMA Institute of Real Estate announced its new schedules for Comprehensive Real Estate Seminars (CRES) and reviews that will be held in Makati and Quezon City as follows:

The Monday afternoon class will be held from 1:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m. on March 15, April 19, 26, May 3, 10, and 17, at Mike's Restaurant, near the exit of Glorietta 2, Makati City. The Monday afternoon class will be on March 10, April 14, 21, 28, May 5 and 12, same time and venue, while the 7-session Tuesday evening class will be on March 11, April 8, 15, 22, 29, and May 6 all to be from 6 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., also at the same location in Makati City. The Thursday afternoon class will be held at Mac's Restaurant in Alabang West Business Center Cubao, Quezon City on March 13, April 17, and May 1, 8, and 15 from 1:15 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.

Debra Cruz, 1st and 8th placer in the real estate appraisers and brokers board examination respectively, and son Rex Enrico S. Cruz III, are lined up to lecture on the subjects officially prescribed by the Department of Trade and Industry.

Dr. Ilan also announced that updated copies of "Comprehensive Notes and Reviewer For Real Estate Broker's Examination" and "Marketing the Real Estate Broker's Asset" are now available for distribution to aspiring examinees.

For questions, call 681-0928 or 681-0862 or 0918-620-8174 or 0921-600-8421 or by e-mail at urbanrealtechnic.net.ph or urbanet.ph@gmail.com

Championing global coffee trade practices

MCSCAFE continues to champion global coffee trade practices through its membership in the newly organized Common Code for Coffee Community (4C) Association.

"As the leader in the coffee industry, we are at the forefront in the promotion of globally accepted practices," says Bruno Oberhuber, Asia-Pacific business executive manager for the coffee business unit.

The 4C Association counts as its members stakeholders in the coffee production, trade and industry, civil society, and public organizations.

"We are not only concerned with issues that affect us, but those that involve the other industry stakeholders that affect and in one way or another affect the coffee farmers," Oberhuber adds.

The 4C Association outlines its mission as the following: "The efficient production and processing of coffee, combined with respect for the social and environmental conditions of its production, form the basis for improving the situation of coffee growers and workers worldwide."

This is done through incentives that are "designed to optimize transparency and traceability along the whole coffee chain and to increase the economic and individual responsibilities in the production, processing and trading of coffee."

4C-initiated projects have already been done in the coffee-producing countries of Colombia, Brazil, Guatemala and Ethiopia. Ongoing projects are also being done in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Honduras and Vietnam.

Here in the Philippines, Mercafe has the coffee-based sustainable farming system (CBSFS) program and this Nestle-supported and demonstration farm (NESF) 4C-related programs that were initiated even before the establishment of 4C.

CBSFS helps farmers increase their income by encouraging the planting of other crops alongside coffee, while the NESF is a training center in Davao that reinforces the importance of good crop management as well as provides farmers with quality and high-yielding Nestle-to-coffee planting materials.

To date, the NESF provides 85 percent of all Robusta cuttings in the Philippines, with Mercafe currently sourcing dry coffee from around 1,500,000 Filipino coffee farmers and 2,000,000 bean growers.

Mercafe is likewise at the forefront of the sustainable agriculture initiative (SAI) platform in both Davao through its mother company Nestle Switzerland, S.A.) and the Philippines. The platform lays the groundwork for sustainable agriculture practices.

Sports lifestyle brand lands in Manila

Regional manager believes future is bright for line

FREDERIC Guiral

FREDERIC GUIRAL, THE 30-YEAR-OLD regional manager of French sports lifestyle brand Aigle (pronounced "eh-gle," meaning eagle in French), has his hands cut out for him. The majority of the Philippines' outdoor enthusiasts have yet to be introduced to the brand he represents. But it looks like things are about to change.

Aigle, a sports apparel and outdoor gear, was recently launched in the local market.

In recent years, sports lifestyle brands have sprung up in the Philippines, with brands like The North Face and Columbia catering to the needs of the fashionable and the sporty. Aigle is looking to make inroads into the booming trend market with its line of backpacks, garments and footwear. Considering the look of the brand's many predecessors in the country, Guiral is aware of the hard work that lies ahead. Added to that are the usual challenges of working in the clothing and accessories industry. "You work on three or four things at the same time ... you work on the inventory, the collection that is being sold in the shops at the moment and then you have to work on the designs to come ... you have to consider the trends ... it's a bit complicated."

But the Paris-born Guiral, who moved to Asia and began his career in Hong Kong 17 years ago, is the right man for the job. In his long career, he has marketed French leather goods and French food products. As part of his job, he took on the gargantuan task of introducing the Chinese market to the wide array of regional French wines, quite a challenge for consumers who didn't know the difference between Bordeaux and Merlot.

As the man in charge of regional marketing, he now heads a vast network that includes Taiwan, China, Korea, Japan and most recently, the Philippines.

Over 150 years old, Aigle has a long history in France. In 1853, Aigle released one of its first products, a pair of handcrafted, waterproof rubber boots that continued to be patronized by Japanese fashionistas. On a recent trip to Japan, Guiral oversaw an opening dinner of young Japanese women posing for boots with miniskirts. And in France, the brand is even more widely worn. "Sometimes you will leave the train and you will see everyone in Aigle jackets." Aigle's distinctive rubber soles remain its biggest fan, which is no surprise since Aigle's mission revolves around "reinventing rain to nature." But according to Guiral, the brand's appeal is not limited to hardcore mountain climbers or nature-trippers, as the apparel is perfect for any type of outdoor activity. "From your ordinary day-to-day activity to walking in the rain ... wherever you climb out of your bed to travel a short or long distance, you come to Aigle." Indeed, Aigle is popular in markets like Hong Kong and France where consumers value good craftsmanship, functionality and good design.

As a French brand, it is only natural that a lot of emphasis is placed on fashion. Aigle prides itself on dedicated design teams in France dedicated to producing designs for women, men, children and its active brand Activmen. Headed by creative director Gilbert Dop who used to work with Paul Smith, the design teams create eye-catching, fashion-forward designs with a very European feel. But not at the expense of functionality, which is important for both travelers and people on the go. Aigle garments provide protection against the elements, have multiple pockets for convenience, and boast anti-UV, anti-mosquito and dirt-free properties. In fact, according to Guiral, in Hong Kong Aigle is known as the "protection brand." People come to us for Gortex and Dermizax jackets."

Guiral himself is the brand's biggest fan, regularly wearing the Gortex travel jacket for business trips. He plans his trips to China in the winter, the ski jacket on a recent visit to Japan and the multi-pocket travel pants for a summer Balinese excursion.

Aigle recently launched its partnership with Primo, which is the Philippines' leading outdoor lifestyle company. The partnership is the first for Aigle in Southeast Asia, including eventual expansion into other Southeast Asian markets like Singapore. But the first step is to introduce Filipinos to the advantages of Aigle's line, which mixes fashion, functionality and wearability and gives consumers the best in European quality craftsmanship.

"I would like Aigle to be known as the brand that helps people be comfortable in their day-to-day activities," Guiral says. If he has anything to do with it, Manila's streets and shopping malls will soon be filled with people decked out in the latest Aigle products.

OFW starts 'economic advocacy' with franchise

TO PROMOTE OVERSEAS FILIPINO Workers, the chance to work abroad, save up hard-earned dollars and return to the Philippines is the fulfillment of all their lifelong dreams. But for Miguel Ordiz, who had established in Saudi Arabia as a 8-year executive for 20 years and recently returned to the country, this is only the beginning of the dream to share a measure of his success to his countrymen.

Ordiz, as he is known among the close-knit OFW circles, has always figured conveniently as a highly successful professional with a host of gold for Pinoys in the Middle East. He had taken part in the drive to promote the implementation of absentee voting, as well as provide assistance to distressed OFWs in need.

A native of Gangan, Pampanga, Mike returned to find that little had changed in his hometown despite the fact that a lot of pioneer OFWs had come from his province.

"It felt to me like Gangan was left behind by the times. Most of the modern conveniences can be found in neighboring towns like San Fernando, while my hometown remained the same. And the funny thing about this was the people of Gangan have a lot more spending power compared to others in the area. Some family members working abroad and even sending remittances regularly," said Mike.

Mike's business savvy mind recognized that the lack of investments coming into Gangan, which in turn failed to generate further civic development for the town. It was then that he developed his vision for economic advocacy for Gangan by becoming a social entrepreneur—a businessman whose goal is not purely for profit but also for the betterment of the people around him.

Using his savings and a loan he secured from a local bank, he set up a modern commercial building right in the heart of the town and began to look for businesses interested in putting up a shop inside his new business center complex.

"There is nothing wrong with Gangan, the money is there. Businesses just had to jumpstart the economic environment by investing in the town. And with new businesses come jobs that will generate more income for the people. And they can spend. The resulting business climate will help generate funds for the local government that, in turn, will be spent on socio-civic development for the town. So what I basically did was help generate movement of the town's economy," Mike revealed.

Not content with simply providing a venue for businesses, Mike also went ahead and invested in his own 7-Eleven franchise. The familiar logo of the world-class convenience store now serves as a beacon of economic growth for the township.

"My decision to acquire a 7-Eleven franchise was a deliberate move to further push my personal economic advocacy agenda. With a world-class brand now being seen in the center of town, other entrepreneurs will be inspired and will recognize the investment potential of the town that has a population of 120,000 relatively young individuals with high disposable income," said Mike.

Mike's investment paid off, since the store began to have a positive effect on its surroundings. Establishments also sprung up, the buying habits of the people of Gangan. New establishments began to open up around the area while old establishments began to renovate their façade to present a more modern face. The local government also established a 19.2V terminal a few meters away from the store. Jeeps to service commuters traveling between Gangan and the neighboring provinces.

MIKE Ordiz, an OFW-turned-franchisee of a 7-Eleven convenience store

The store also became a convenience point for the townspeople, especially at night, because of its 24-hour operations, quality products and services and a safe facility where they can leave their businesses.

"The 7-Eleven business is also perfect for OFWs like me since almost everything involved in the operation of the business is provided by Philippine Seven Corp. This means that I don't have to reinvent the business and no longer have to risk having my capital through trial and error," Mike shared.

The 31-year-old businessman also revealed another stage in his economic advocacy wherein he will attempt to convince other OFW friends to pool their savings to put up franchises of 7-Eleven franchises of their own.

"They no longer need to reinvent the wheel for the kind of business they will set up with their retirement money. Plus by working as part of the staff of their own franchise store, they will get the chance to refine their skills in managing their capital. And the only challenge they will be facing is how to make their franchise store more profitable," said Mike.

And as his business grows, Mike Ordiz once again becomes an example of what an OFW should be even after retirement—a successful and productive member of our society.

7-Eleven is available for franchise in the areas of La Trinidad, Baguio, Urdaneta, Santa Rita, Pampanga, Bulacan, Laguna, Batangas, Quezon, Cavite and Metro Manila. For inquiries, call 7256968, 8920-9908614 or visit www.7-eleven.com.ph.

Serviced resident owners expands in Manila

FIGURES HOSPITALITY, THE leading international Gold Standard serviced residence owner and management has taken another major step in the expansion of the brand in Manila. The move is signaled by the relocation change of name of Fraser Serviced Residences to Fraser Place Manila—aligning it with Fraser Hospitality properties globally.

Fraser Place is located in the bustling Makati Central Business District and easily accessible from the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. Manila's main international gateway, the 24-hour property is designed to satisfy the demanding needs of long-staying business travelers, boasts of elegantly appointed suites offering all the comforts and services of a modern business hotel.

Fraser Place's luxurious facilities and outstanding quality of service have made it the residence of choice of expat executives working for the different multinational entities in the country. It has consistently enjoyed a high occupancy rate...averaging 92 percent for the past three years. In new Filipino-general manager, Lily Adrid, assures guests excellent service and hospitality rooted in the time-honored traditions of Filipino warmth and friendship.

"Due to the high demand for more upmarket accommodation, our guests and corporate clients can expect a significant expansion in Fraser Place Manila's room stock. This move is a significant part of our vision to give our guests the most ideal residences homes that function to please their every need and demand," informs Gil Adrid. The aggressive expansion program includes the addition of new suites

Okra exporters pin hopes on RP-Japan deal to expand market

FACED WITH A POSSIBLE DECLINE OF okra exports to Japan, the Philippine Okra Producers and Exporters Association (Popea) is pinning its hopes on the Japanese-Philippine Economic Partnership Agreement (Jppa) to maintain and, if possible, increase its exports of okra and other agricultural products to Japan.

Roberto Amores, Popea president, explained that because of continued chemical residue problems, the exports of okra products to Japan may decline by 20 percent this year. Last year, the Philippine exported 4,000 metric tons of okra to Japan, valued at $11-million (about P440-million).

It is feared that because of failure of local vegetable farmers to meet the quality standards of the Japanese market, the exportation of okra to Japan could drop to $8.2 million (P360 million) in value.

Consequently, Popea is appealing to the Department of Agriculture to intensify its educational campaign among vegetable farmers to train them in the proper use of chemicals as pesticides and fertilizers in order to meet the quality standards demanded by Japanese market for vegetables, especially okra.

In the meantime, Popea members are calling on the Senate to fast-track the ratification of Jppa in order to further open up the rich Japanese market to more agricultural products from the Philippines, thereby providing more income for Filipino farmers.

Japan is the second-largest market for Philippine agricultural exports, closely following the United States, data from the Department of Trade and Industry disclosed.

Pitch for ratification of the Jppa, almost 0% percent of Philippine exports to Japan will enjoy zero tariff when all tariffs are removed in Japan. This would facilitate the entry of Filipino agricultural exports to Japan, benefiting Filipino farmers, fishermen and food processors, according to DTI Secretary Peter Favila.

Okra and asparagus are the Philippines' two major fresh vegetable exports to Japan. Okra fetches a price advantage because demand comes from hotels and restaurants. Philippine pumpkin is frozen here is also a potentially exportable vegetable to Japan.

Pitch the ratification of Jppa, Japan will immediately lift tariffs on vegetables such as asparagus and okra, on fruits such as mangoes, durian, guavas, papayas, mangosteen, figs and dates, berries, apples and grapes, and juices such as turbo and duck. Tariffs on garlic, peas and grape juice will also be lifted in phases.

Under the Jppa, almost 80 percent of total Philippine pineapple exports. With a reduced tariff rate quota under Jppa, fresh and dried pineapple products from the Philippines can expect a wider market demand in Japan.

Pitch repeal in marine products, 6% percent of Philippine exports of shrimps and crabs are shipped to Japan. Under Jppa, shrimps will immediately enjoy elimination of tariffs, while tariffs on crabs will go through gradual elimination. Tariffs for yellow tuna and shrimps will be eliminated in five years.

The boost in Philippine agricultural exports through Jppa would result in more employment in the rural areas and provide significant additional income for the rural population, DTI declared. The vegetable farmers asked the Senate to immediately ratify Jppa.

Bright Minds Read bring hope to Filipino children

RECOGNIZING THAT READING AND comprehension are the basic building blocks of education, Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC), the charity arm of quick-service restaurant chain McDonald's, has launched various initiatives aimed at helping Filipino children progress in their reading and comprehension skills.

At the heart of these is the Bright Minds Read (BMR) program, aimed largely at public school children, who most often do not have access to books and materials that facilitate reading and comprehension.

A partnership between the Department of Education and RMHC, BMR aims to bring a beginning readers' toolkit to public school children and their teachers.

A BMR kit consists of 51 storybooks, the teacher's bonus plus and the student's workbooks. The storybooks and workbooks are designed to guide students through the basics of reading and to strengthen their comprehension, while the bonus plan is designed to make the teaching process easier for the instructors.

This early, the BMR has shown to be effective in improving the reading skills of children. As a result, BMR kits are now being used in 1928 and in 17 regions, and the number of users is growing. Recent additions are the city of Iloilo, where City Mayor Jose Villanueva, through its school board, equipped Grade-1 classrooms with the Bright Minds kits.

Seventy-five teachers and principals joined the Bright Minds training in San Clip In Dumaguete, the joint efforts of City Mayor Jerry Perdieos and Rep. George Arnaiz, enabled 9,650 classrooms equipped with BMR kits.

RMHC is confident that by 2010, some 37,200 public school classrooms will have their BMR kits and is collaborating with various organizations to use this dream through.

As part of the World Children's Day celebration, for instance, all McDonald's stores donated Bright Minds Read kits to different public schools. The projects is now on its fifth year at halfway through the 12-year commitment of RMHC.

As part of its mission to help uplift the well-being of Filipino public school children, RMHC also provides day care centers where children can play and learn at the same time.

RMHC recently opened four Ronald Mobile Day Care Centers in Pangasinan City Isang City, Tarlac City and Olongapo City. This project was spearheaded by McDonald's Philippines founder George Yang and first DSWD Secretary Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

From its inception, Ronald Mobile has been building day care centers in low income areas and providing primary education to children under age four. At present, there are 14 Ronald Mobile Day Care Centers and two more are in the construction process.

"RMHC constantly strives to improve on its role-tradition as a good community person and neighbor," says Bernardo Yang, president of RMHC. "By the needs of the children have increased over time, so has the need for companies and citizens to play a more active role in effecting positive change."

This is embodied in the cooperation and collaboration McDonald's has with different organizations and government agencies to implement its projects and make a difference.

With 267 stores in the Philippines, McDonald's is uniquely positioned to help. With a simple purchase of a Happy Meal, a portion automatically goes to Ronald McDonald House Charities to benefit its programs that help the Filipino children. Donations boxes can also be found at the cash counter.

For RMHC, nothing is more important and more rewarding than helping the Filipino children reach their full potential. The Ronald McDonald House Charities have a direct and immediate impact on the lives of these kids and their families and will continue to wholeheartedly help these kids with sustainable programs all year round.

BRIGHT Minds Read is primarily aimed at establishing ties for reading and enhancing reading capability of grade school pupils.

RECYCLED bags by Bilibidup of Pasaje have sold well during the festival.

A PRODUCT of Philippine Treasures

Good practices ...

From page B1

P500,000 in Boracay. This comes to a P5.3 million windfall for Boracay growers of Bagasin and Boracay.

Kin displayed a duck-billed float that showcased one of its calendars, "and it was a poor man's version because it cost us only P150,000," Jose says. Reporters from PS Express, Charice Bautista, Paola Bernal Jugan, Bonnie Joy Dalmasso and Vincent Galvezan

PSBank Peso Time Deposit

Deposit Amount	Interest Rates	
In Pesos	30 Days	91 Days - 1 Year
100,000 - 499,999	3.125	3.125
500,000 - 999,999	3.375	3.375
1.0MM - 4.99MM	4.125	4.125
5.0MM and up	4.250	4.250

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THE WINNING Smart PLDT float wows spectators at the Panagbenga float parade.

Flowers send would-be farmer's ...

From page B1

2009. It won third prize in the open category, losing 20 cabos to tenders.

The two silver winners were the science of Parehuelo and Jollibee, the latter also Ashi's creation.

While the Panagbenga means brisk business in the areas where the floats, it also means intense competition between industry rivals.

"It is very important for an artist to submit [our] his technique in creating the float. There are contractors who, once they get hold of another artist's concept and technique, will not think twice about reducing their fees to ridiculous levels, just to bag a client," John says. Those clients end up being shortchanged by those contractors and have no choice but to enjoy floats of poor quality.

The good news to the float artists of Baguio City is, with the Panagbenga getting more and more popular every year, there are also more and more people that join the float parade. "There's enough to go around for us here in Baguio," John says.

"Alumni of the Asian Institute of Management (AIM) are invited to the Grand Alumni Homecoming 2008 dubbed as "Asian High at Boni High" on March 7, 2008 / Friday, 6:00 pm at the Bonifacio High Street, Bonifacio Global City in Taguig City. This is also in celebration of AIM's 40th (Ruby) Foundation Year. The event is presented by lead host class MBM 1988 and Smart Infinity. Major sponsors are Fort Bonifacio Development Corporation (FBDC) and Ayala Land, Inc. For more details, pls. contact the AIM Alumni Office at 892-4011.

Sunday BIZ

WOOL gracing become good fabric for the products of Habaraf crafts from Leyte.

P3 MILLION worth of flowers dress up the floats.

PHILIPPINE Treasures, a Baguio-based firm, has found good profits from Panagbenga since 1995.

Good practices overshadow commercialism of flower festival

PLDT BUSINESS SOLUTIONS HOSTS TECHNOLOGY UPDATE FOR UNIONBANK

PLDT Business Solutions recently hosted a technology update on various PLDT corporate products and services for UnionBank of the Philippines at the PLDT Vestal.

Recognized as among Asia's best companies by Euromoney and Finance Asia, UnionBank of the Philippines started its operations in 1981 and became a commercial bank by 1992. Today, multiple channels are available for transaction and information access: 167 branches nationwide, 186 ATMs, a call center and an Internet bank.

Shown in photo are, front row, from left: Mari Ramos, UnionBank Vice-President; Head, Mike Montalbo, UnionBank SVP, Network Engineer Technology Management Services; Jimmy Tiaoqui, PLDT Corporate Sales Relationship Manager; Pete Pigalla, UnionBank SVP Technology Management Services and CNO-head.

Second row, from left: Jeremy Tambeau, UnionBank Helpdesk Head; Technology Management Services; Jun Barjasan, PLDT Sr. Product Manager; Joel Sevara, PLDT Product Manager; Anthony Gutierrez, PLDT Capability Management Specialist; and Florencio Garma, UnionBank Network Supervisor - Communication and Network Infrastructure.

BAGUIO CITY—EACH YEAR the Panagbenga Flower Festival is staged, expect an outpouring of public outrage over the "crass commercialism" that attends this tourist-drawing event because of the large confluence of brand names displayed along downtown Baguio.

But it is the good that comes out of the 13th Panagbenga, which organizers want residents to ponder, Catherine Alviza, a festival official, says the event has taught local businesses good business practices. Business have become a staple of food stalls setup on Session Road, which is crowned each year into a bazaar called "Session Road in Bloom." Some of the participants used to operate street food businesses.

Organizers also say that the festival has helped aspiring businessmen find their start.

Several outlets at Session Road are trying out new products.

Jean Quiros introduced Unica, a Manila-based kitchenware retail store, to Baguio for the first time through the festival.

She says she has discovered that the outlet it generates gave them good business. "I intend to see if [my business] would work here. I liked the exposure," she says.

Jolito Sores, director of Subasdi, a tarp tile firm that uses Tiong grass, says the Panagbenga gave them better exposure than in all the other festivals where they displayed their products.

ANOTHER stall at Philippine Treasures.

The food outlet called "Crying Ladies" earned their name from the festival organizers, according to the stall's employees.

"Wala kaming pangalan kaya eto ang naglagay. Ayan daw mukha. (We had no name so organizers gave us ours. It was meant to sound different)," she says.

Profits that are generated by the local flower industry best exemplify the benefits of this festival.

Mon Jose, manager of Bit Baguio, says all 37 floats that participated in the flower parade spent between P350,000 and

SWEATER crafts from Leyte.

MANILA-BASED Unica finds Panagbenga exposure profitable.

Flowers send would-be farmer's career b(l)ooming

THOUSANDS OF LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL tourists trek to the City of Pines in February to marvel at the colorful grand procession of plant and floral arrangements, the highlight of the annual Panagbenga or Flower Festival.

With entries from the public and private sectors all aspiring to be the best, the competition is considered half-won when a participant finds and settles an agreement with a contractor who can transform his or her concepts or designs in to the real artwork. The contractor's work then commences, along with the long and often sleepless days, which end only after the winners are announced on Panagbenga weekend.

So what does it take to make a winning Panagbenga float?

Some 2,200 dozens of a variety of flowers; 240 bundles of leaves and other greens; 20 sacks of moss—plus creativity, a lifetime of skills and a lot of heart, according to John Kimo, a landscape artist and float maker from Baguio. He and his team made two of the five winning floats this year, one a float of leading wireless service provider, Smart Communications Inc., and its parent company, PLDT, which won third prize.

"The entire process usually takes about a month or less, depending on the intricacy of the design and the client's mind in the artist," says John, 29.

These days, a first prize Arches about P300,000 for John, with about 60 percent of that amount going to materials, labor and other expenses. The remaining P80,000 is enough compensation for the back breaking work, he says. Off-season, he makes enough from landscaping services to tide his family over until the next flower festival.

For John, it wasn't always paradise the past: a host of woes. After obtaining his agriculture degree from Benguet State University, the low vegetable prices at the time discouraged him from pursuing a full-time farming career.

With opportunities few and far between, he decided to look for an alternative career and found himself going into landscaping and floral arrangements, at the swanky Baguio Country Club.

There, under the able supervision of Sonia Chan, whom John remembers his mentor, he watched, assisted as an assistant laborer and learned the intricate art of creating award-winning floral floats.

In 2000, he struck out on his own, and soon after, bagged the contract to make the Panagbenga float for Smart, a constant supporter of the city's annual festival. For the SBS nine since that year, winning only 2004, John and his team have been making the Panagbenga float for Smart.

For last weekend's Panagbenga parade, he entered for Smart-PLDT a float interpreting the fiesta, "Rooted in Bloom," and depicting the start to the countdown to Baguio City's centennial in

LANDSCAPE artist John Kimo explains the process of creating winning Panagbenga floats.

Sunday LIFESTYLE
Criss Cross Bonsai-Fortunoy

IN THIS ISSUE
Sea Princess rhapsodizes about 'Rhapsody' /D2

It's a wrap

By Chris Bonsai-Fortunoy

No regrets. I've had good moments from this tour of duty and I've met some of the most productive and wonderful people hereabouts—the so-called movers and shakers—but I'll leave the Lifestyle lingo to 'palangga' Maurice and Sea Princess

AS I WRITE THIS, ONE of my dearest friends is lying in bed unable to move because the cancer has spread to her spinal column. Her words are incoherent from the cancer having eaten into her brains.

"Metastasized" is a horrible, horrible word. Every time her husband used it to try to describe what was happening, I imagined an evil-looking and agitated creature smashing, crashing and shredding its way through my friend's body.

Not knowing how far gone the cancer was, I had begged for Angel's healing as she Lourdes-grotto in Fresno for three ministry days. "I should have prayed for her to be freed from pain and suffering," I said to Inquirer editor in chief Letty Jimenez-Magsanoc the other day.

She never heeded. Overcome by this kind of events for our sweet and dear friend. As I was leaving her office Letty called out, "Count your blessings, Chel." All day I had been thinking of exactly that.

Angel and I are of the same age. We both studied journalism at the University of the Philippines. We were both writers for the Panorama magazine under Letty back when the Bulletin was the top newspaper. We both married colleagues from the same paper. We both have two children. Then that be...

My turn

The amazing thing is that I started this year by asking the Lifestyle staff, as well as some people whose outlook in life I liked, to count their blessings. Likewise, I invited readers to share theirs. And now here was my boss telling me to do the same. Well, allow me to oblige some this in the last issue I am putting my hand for Lifestyle.

It has been my singular blessing to have walked this section for the past eight years. I took over the post at a crucial time for the country and now I'm leaving it at a time equally muddled by anomalies linked to Malacañang, except today, thankfully, the boycotton seems to be in no danger of an advertising boycott.

I mention this merely to serve as a time frame. None of the corruption hearings and counter-accusations has affected the content of Lifestyle in a profound way at any time, although my thinking is that they should have.

What matters is there for a matter like this that is so forgiving of ethical and moral lapses by no less than the President?

Now I can help find the answer to that question in the new section of Inquirer that I will be editing in the meantime, until we can coin a bigger term for it, let's call it Edutainment.

To put together a section that is about what I think matters most morally in the life of the nation is a wonderful gift. It is so small blessing to be allowed to examine the very system that, I believe, is the key to our country's moral and economic emancipation.

It took a leap of faith for Letty to offer me the Lifestyle job, knowing as she did that I was no fashionista or storyteller. It was a leap for me, too, to have accepted. But if anyone has ever given it's me me because I've had a run of feel-good moments (turn this one of duty and I've met some of the most productive and wonderful people hereabouts (aka movers and shakers, but I'll leave the Lifestyle lingo to the deft hands of palangga Maurice and Sea Princess).

Ben Chan

One of them is Ben Chan, who sold his first comic T-shirts 20 years ago his way. He made artist Richard Gomez wear the bench bear (named the public's heart).

In the years that I've been with Lifestyle, this gentle bear of a man has sprung a number of surprises on us,

(TO LA STORY) D2

It's a wrap

From page 11

not the issue of them his country undercover drama headlined by big show-biz stars.

Who would have believed shy Bro. was capable of pushing Antonio Calvente to the ref

I've watched him add (former, Bench Body and Bathboy on his list of Mayor's cronies, some aliases and honorary titles called Pik, and dare to enumerate to be shot the size of improved broadcasts as Grilo (announcer); Grey-haired (Bathster); The Boy Shop (Senary); Charlie-A Birds (Alsace); Pedro (Ghost); and Aldo (more chest).

As he did so, Bro. tossed Saigon Mr Phong pop mixes. I drink it, says a lot about Bro. that Gilda Cordero-Fernando has written a book for him and that Bench counts dimpled and sunless citizens among its employees.

Over lunch one day I happened to mention that the college team for which a nephew of mine played was so poor and ill-equipped the players did not even have towels to use. My **nephew's team** always got passed around during practice or during a game.

If he forgot to bring a towel, that was it, they all went dry, dry, dry-ping. **Before I leave it, Bench had sent** a big box of towels to the team. I only found out from my nephew. If someone else had told him that one's name who was not an athlete, would Bro. have done the same? I think so.

Anton Huang

Then there is Anton Huang, another could-conceived guy with a unique opposite for the challenges of business. He keeps adding to the source of international fashion labels that BE distributes exclusively in the country that I've lost count.

Prada, DKNY, Burberry Lacoste, Ferragamo, Zegna, Rene, Bottega Veneta, Hush, Kate Spade, Paris, to-whatever-else's-trending, ensured the hotel for Filipino shoppingness, courtesy of Anton and his cousin Sindy?

Like Ben, Anton travels a lot. Goes on his way home to Manila from Europe, he stopped in Hong Kong to attend a Tatu presentation. In the evening, the Italian luxury leather group threw a dinner for its Asian partners and the media. It was almost midnight when we left the restaurant. On the way to the hotel, Anton wanted to stop at a bank because, he admitted rather sheepishly, he didn't have money for cab fare.

"Pancit, please, let's not stop," I said. "Where are the pictures of our day telling my grandchildren the story of how once upon a time I was in Hong Kong with tatum Anton Huang and I had to pay for the taxi ride because he didn't have money?

Manuel Chua

Although not quite a cajun, Manuel O. Chua has the influence of one. We met when he brought a big delegation to witness the inauguration of the Fiscal Zhuxue in Shenzhen, the national hero's ancestral village in Fujian Province, China.

Mr. Chua took us sightseeing the **next day** and succeeded in having a **temple reopened for our visit, after it** had already closed for the day. Now, I said to him, I'm never going back to Xiamen without you!

On the bus, as we went from place to place, he told us stories about his church, how his mother had tried to **convince** him from an early age to support community projects—a school-house here, a deep well there, a statue in a here.

I've heard a lot of Filipinos say they're never going to migrate because they love the Philippines. Really? **What have you done for her lately?** Look at what the man has accomplished and he wasn't even born here.

Lizzie and Margarita

Included in my series of Fortunate Incidents in this job is the day Lizzie Zobel and Margarita Delgado, the duo behind the Aklat Sinikat, came to the Inquirer to tell our personality about their literacy projects.

Lizzie, originally from Colombia and married to the man who now runs the huge Ayala conglomerate, accidentally left her day planner in our office. **When I saw that her organizer** was frayed and almost falling apart, I was convinced that the master book area.

What impressed me was that Lizzie and Margarita didn't just buy the books and leave them in the schools, they trained the teachers, conducted contests to gauge student understanding—the works.

When they realized that many kids could not read because their eyes were bad, these women started collecting eyeglass frames and added a sight correction component to the project.

Other unforgettables

And what **was Angel?**... Jules Gulmegani who was an interviewer's delight, answering every question before it's done. On his 60th birthday he donated a big chunk of his wealth to be used in relocations. **Any man who does that** deserves a billboard in the sky, as far as I'm concerned.

...Socorro Ramos, another dream interviewee, who has fought to have the right to print textbooks to newsprint so they would be more affordable. If I can be half as alert and strong as she when I'm 65, I'll be so lucky. Oh, I wouldn't mind having half the number of her National Book Awards either.

...Imelda Cojuangco whose high-profile **fascination** for ribbons and bows belies a deep devotion to Mary that has prompted her to put together the Cofradia de la Inmaculada Concepcion. Despite an almost debilitating nearsightedness, she leads the group every year in staging a grand procession.

...Jaro Cochiacos of the Fly Ace hotel company who took a media group to Iloilo and allowed us the sublime experience of our jaws praying on the dioceses of St. Francis of Assisi but also observing how votive virgin olive oil is made.

...The Trills of Tinacious who took **rare chefs (Glenda Barretto and Idlet**te Sagmoderado) and a groupie (me) to some country and got us invitations to stay in divine vineyard chateaux. The Carnaceous leg of that trip to **France was an unforgettable** as Kenny Pascual's famous trips for the scenery, the company and, most of all, the way Tita launched a mental problem-having bash at home.

...Celebrity Tattoos: who, alongside her husband Boomie, is at the helm of two supermarkets, five Shoppices and three, no mean feat, Mariam's Foods. She can eat a good piece of steak with gusto and not gain weight. I love **this** in that, I ask you. I told Dee I was once at a party where a woman, seeing what I was holding a bibok, said, "How un-diet! She still eat meat?" Extremely rude, I thought. Gricket agreed and said, "You know, I would have said to her, go eat bitter and leave me alone to eat what I **want.**"

...The many incredibly talented artists and designers as well as pretty decent PR practitioners with whom I've had a mutually respectful relationship, but I shall not name them for their own good.

Food trip

A Bebe **summon:** I was a size 30 when I savored the editorships of Lifestyle and now I am a size too big for comfort because of the food gifts.

Friday night: Chinese from Resto Tan's Shanghai Bistro, this **pizza and** salad from CPK, inclusive from Old Swiss Inn, dame good roast beef from Chef Bit, danta good paella from Chef Ed Quimson, **pretty** good ham from **The Plaza, yesterday** okay from Agnes Quirino, cupcake from Glenda Barretto, guso de foie cheesecake from Myrna Segismundo, smoked bamboo burger from Gia Garcia, pinaybio pulvoron from Jessie Sisantos, khalorong from the cuties Maricel Morales Rivera, dobol chocolate-chip cookies from Rose Libongcia, lucuban food tape from Girlie Rodis, gelato from Shirley and cannoli at Tita Pacing from Ruthy Cuna, to servings Waldorf salad from Peggy Ramos... oh the list is endless and yummy beyond words.

The best C's

The salutations I have invited to grace the pages of Lifestyle have been the best... Almarie and Tessa for the social scene, Peggie Ingkiat and Micky Nera on food, Cory Quirino on well-being and fitness, Ayalas Sandiwood and Jenny Ipparraa on fashion, Bie Pelero and Rissy Salas on beauty, Linda Bolilis on consumer concerns, Emily Marcelo for advice, and a fresh writer and rookie from the International School named Serena Madrigal Gelb for 2K13.

For a while there, we succeeded in tempting Bea Zobel Jr to write an **un**pretentious, readable column for our Art and Culture pages, but her not to her children takes their education demanded her attention. I wish them all good luck and God speed.

Contributed pieces of solid writing are always a blessing to editors, and here I single out those by my old Gilda editor Ali and close writing you can always hold up to aspiring writers, the fearless Rissy. Do take pains her sharp pen (see the goings-on in **haute society** and new writers for Hong Kong based Financial Times, Virgie Moreno) who is married to Jones, Bench Attorney who is always inspirational, Patrick Lanuza who shares stories and pictures from his travels to off-the-grid places, Mitch Felipe who has picked up where Titus Abalos has left off, and Gina Marie, whose restaurant reviews have been right on and whose identity I will take with me to the grave.

Like cooking

As for the staff, I like to think we had many good times that had, but age has a way of distorting memories so that may not be how they remember, in which case they should take a much deserved toss for putting up with me for eight long years.

And now to wrap things up... telling the Lifestyle section has been a lot like cooking at home (had no **mas**ter).

You plan a menu for one week, a different dish for each day (take) when you want healthy fare, leftovers when you're short for time, takeout pizza for the kids, seafood every Friday, something special every Sunday—like this!

Much after week you do the shopping, the dicing, the **boiling.** You know the smell and taste of your dish as too well. It gets to a point where even when you consider something new, just because you prepared it yourself, the flavor fails to excite you.

But sometimes the food becomes more exciting when someone else cooks it. It's the same stew but in someone else's hands, maybe with a bit of her secret ingredients, and served in a bowl with a design that she has chosen, you can't wait to dig in.

When I look at Lifestyle in the morning, everything about it is all too familiar because I had put that issue to bed. I know its contents by heart. I've always believed there should be something for everyone in Lifestyle, but **you can't do it almost every day,** year in year out, and not run out of steel.

New chef

Well, now I can open the pages of Lifestyle with much anticipation again because there's a new chef. Thelma San Juan is a pro who brings the right spirit to the job, a lifestyle **presence** you might say, having worked in this field since the 1970s.

Here's the same editor I replaced in 2000 when she decided to join ABS-CBN Publishing full time. The result is Thelma never really left the business.

She remained a consultant and wrote the columns culled (she opted every Friday. Now that she's been called back to senior duty, however, readers can look forward to more surprises in Lifestyle, with lots of style.

E-mail the author at dilyrosa@inquirer.com.ph

MANUEL O. CHUA, chair of Tulay Foundation, wonders children of Barangay West Talangan in Cavinti, Laguna, enjoy the water the 200-foot deep well donated by the Federation of Chinese Filipino Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

VINCENT CABRERA

Arabian night for twin debutantes

From page F1

young people. Friends of the celebrants and their families flooding them were Iloilo City Mayor Jerry Treñas with wife Shaper and their son Miguel.

After the buffet supper, it was showtime. The Cover Band performed, and so did the Cebu Dancesport Team which had won international awards in ballroom dancing. They surrounded a spectacle worthy of a revue.

Also performing were Amee and Jeffrey Gallejo, Iggy Alejandro, Jhico J. Pano, and the Orlando Boys...Tay Sisters, Jimmy Bondoc, Paolo Santos and Luke Mijares. The fun continued until way past midnight.

At one point a spirited group organized a conga line that went snaking through the ballroom.

JASMIN Ellen Sarmiento with Cebu Mayor Tommy Osmeña

MIGUEL and Margot Osmeña

EDGAR and Penny Sarmiento

JANDRAW Philip Sarmiento and Doña Paz Veloso

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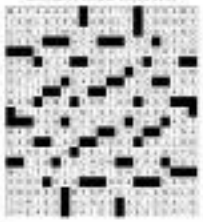

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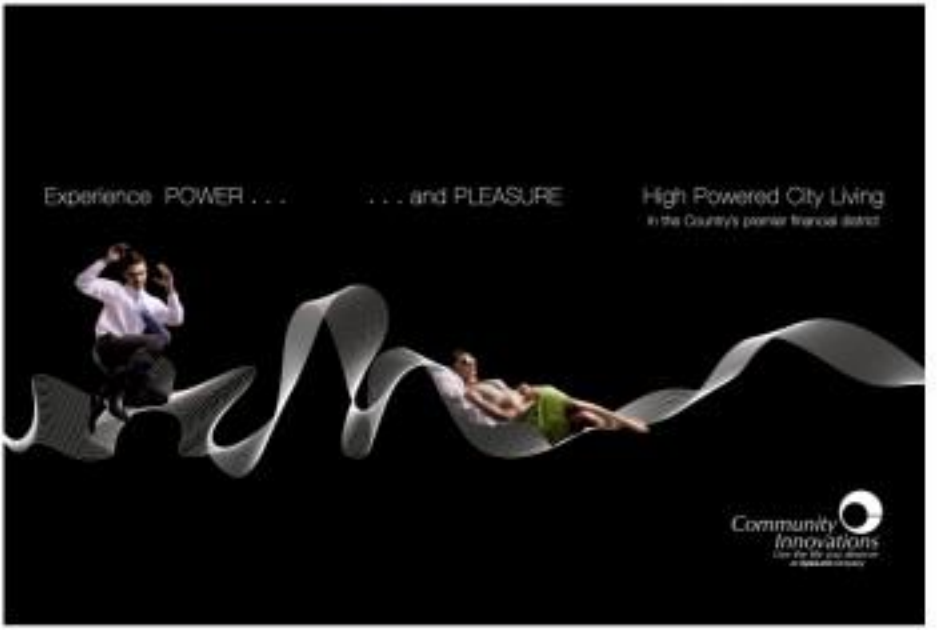

SARMIENTO twins in Jun Escar in green; Jennifer Elaine in blue, Jasmin Elton in pink

CEBU CEBU
Jaime Pimentel

Arabian night for twin debutantes

THE CRIMSON HALL OF THE SHANGRI-LA was hosted by Edgar and Penny Jose Weigel's namesake at the Pacific Ballroom of Shangri-la Hotel to mark the 18th birthday of their twin daughters Jasmin Elton and Jennifer Elaine.

Identical and very pretty, it is hard to tell the twins apart. Designer Jun Escareo covered the confusion by making a frothy blue gown for Jennifer and a pink one for Jasmin. They floated about in a setting out of Cinderella.

Or was it a scene in some enchanted inn in an oasis worthy of Scheherazade and her 1001 Arabian Nights with fountains tinkling all over, guardian sentinels twirling wines, curtain gates, and twigs dripping with crystal prisms sparkling like diamonds in the soft lights?

Jennifer and Jasmin, as well as their darling brother Andrew Philip, were all over the place, hopping from table to table, chatting with everyone on this beautiful occasion.

Of course, there was a waltz, danced by the twins alternately with their dad and brother. Each was presented 18 roses, and 18 candles were lit to make as many good wishes come true.

Seated at a table with a vantage view were the twins' paternal grandfather Oscar Sarmiento and their affable maternal grandmother Ma Weigel, widow of the late and much-loved Mayor Ernesto Weigel of Lapu-Lapu City.

Guests represented a formidable cross-section of Cebu Society—old families, business tycoons, civic leaders and a throng of

ABROAD 11

RICO J. Puno (right) takes the mic from Edgar Sarmiento.

Sunday LIFESTYLE

10 years of grief and consolation

MIGAS enacted the Mideo daycare center titled "Bedtu good all the time"

ROOTS AND WINGS
Cathy Babao-Cabello

MY SON MIGI MARKED HIS 14th birthday in heaven last Feb. 21. He has been living there, with the heavenly father, for 10 years now.

"Does it become easy after 10 years?" Many people, some of them, bereaved parents like myself, have asked countless times. I choose to answer the question with both yes and no.

Yes, because after nine years, you do not cry as much as you did during the first few years.

But no, because you continue to remember. There is not a day that goes by when you do not think of that little boy who filled your life with love and laughter, but was gone too soon.

Yes, because God is gracious and merciful, and

(TURN TO P4

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FAMILY friend Mandy Consunji Torres (in pink gown) and her college classmates at St. Theresa's College '79 on board the Rhapsody

M/S Rhapsody captain Nyseter with Joy Abregan and Joanne Ramirez

CRUISING family of Pueblo Boracay Edelweiss Restaurant

Oh, what a 'Rhapsody' it was!

SHOW-BIZ parents Raymart Santiago and Claudine Barretto with little lady Sunshine and daughter Sabina

ONCE AGAIN, THE SEA Princess had the chance to cruise onboard one of the luxurious ships of Royal Caribbean International. This time around, I enjoyed the five-night, five-stop Indo-China Explorer itinerary on M/S Rhapsody of the Seas.

With its fleet of ships already sailing the seven seas all over the world – from the tip of Alaska to the depths of South America – it was only a matter of time before Royal Caribbean added Asia to its destination list. The Rhapsody of the Seas will be cruising Vietnam and China until the end of March and will spend a month in Korea and Japan until the end of April.

Royal Caribbean will reserve its Asian itineraries in December and will assign another five ships, top-end of the line, to the region. Celebrity Cruises, its global cruise sister company, will offer Australia and New Zealand packages starting November this year to herald the Millennium.

To catch our cruise, I flew to Hong Kong via Philippine Airlines. Taking PAL is always an experience since it has its own terminal. It is convenient and the staff is excellent. Even if I had to wake up very early in the morning, the thought of browsing through the duty-free shops later was a delight.

While waiting for my turn, I saw new parents **Claudine Barretto** and **Raymart Santiago**, together with their whole clan, heading to Hong Kong as well. Their cute little bundle of joy was asleep the whole time.

The turbulence free flight was great, especially the attentive service onboard. I personally slept the whole way and the flight since I did an all-nighter of packing/packing. I was afraid to bring excess luggage, knowing I was going to spend the weekend after the cruise on a shopping spree with my fashionista classmates. But luggage and I have an understanding of some sort – I always bring an excess of it.

The online booking of Royal Caribbean makes the process much faster after checking in at the express line and getting our seacard, our cruise group of Joy Abregan, HSP and COO of Raven Travel and Airport 66, and fellow lifestyle writers **Maurice Arcache** and **Joanne Ramirez** did some speedy shopping at Sharon's before embarking.

CAPT. OLAV Nyseter with his mighty crew on the last night of the cruise

BIRTHDAY Lady Mirae Puello-Baron, great grandson Miggy and granddaughter Erika

ASSUMPTION classmates on HK shopping spree: Girlie Sison, Lisa Bautista, Pia Lorenzo, Sea Princess and Peprin Barrios

IMPRESSIVE multilevel atrium at the center of the Rhapsody

ENERGETIC Pinoy dining staff

'Titanic'-like

Measuring an impressive 915 feet in length and with a passenger capacity of 2,435, the Rhapsody is strikingly magnificent from any angle. She has two names of great concepts, relentless and really affording panoramic views of the sea and all adding to her beauty. No wonder she is called the "Ship of Light."

I could go on and on about the fun facts of the ship. Numbers generally bore me but those are amazing. The fabulous Dining Room seats 1,200 guests; enough food was ordered on board the ship to have built two fifth towers. The galleys run on a staggering 6,800 dishes for dinner each night. And so and so and so.

My favorite statistic though is that among the 765-strong crew, which includes 81 cooks in the kitchen and 25 musicians hailing from 52 countries, the Pinoy crew outnumber the rest of the nationalities. Do Philippines!

Measuring an impressive 915 feet in length and with a passenger capacity of 2,435, the Rhapsody is strikingly magnificent from any angle

TESSA! Tessie Prieto-Valdes

Beyond normal service, the ship's signature Gold Anchor Service is wonderfully experienced, thanks to the efficient and hard-working Filipino crew who will surely serve with a smile. The cruise becomes more personalized and even more unforgettable thanks to our Kabalikpan.

Upon settling into my ocean view cabin, with my own deck, I waited for the Mandatory Guest Muster Drill where we do our "Titanic" emergency exercises complete with our life vests. Shortly after, we headed straight to Windjammer Buffet to start our food marathon.

Familiarizing myself with the features and activities is easier with the Cruise Compass, the daily newsletter that is packed with information on tips, the evening's entertainment, is fully glossy and highlights. The nightly Las Vegas production-level shows are highly entertaining and not to be missed.

The soaring 30-ft tall Rock Climbing Wall is something to see and even more challenging to conquer. There's also a full gym and spa onboard, with fun activities to keep the guests fit despite the constant calorie intake.

Since Day 2 is at sea, I kept myself busy with the ongoing activities including some of the Adventure Ocean programs for the kids onboard. Supervised by professionally certified youth staff, the kids' activities are packed with art projects and fun games. Under Pirates and Explorers stay around the ship with their makeshift swords.

ROCK-CLIMBING wall on top deck

DINING with Capt. Olav Gunnar Nyseter, Joy Abregan, John Willam and Maureen Reis, Maurice Arcache, Jane Barker, Anthony Parsons, Joanne Ramirez, Brian and Elaine Morrissey and Sea Princess

SHAPPODY of the Seas docked in Vietnam

ENGINEERS on holiday Mr. and Ms JD Bernardo

State-of-the-art

The state-of-the-art amenities and exquisite dining experiences have been fine-tuned with Asian touches like lavender, origami towels, and mahjong games. I was only able to join the Crab Fest Royal Binge and almost won. The lucky ladies were some elegant classmates from St. Theresa's College '79. Family friend Mandy Consunji-Torres told me they shared a bingo card and won a free upgrade to the Owner's Suite that they took turns in sleeping in.

With so many Shore Excursions available, it is highly recommendable to book ahead because the popular choices get full. In the Vietnam Explorer tour, I topped the activities in 8 Day Tours and Imperial Run. Both were full so we took either his tours that ended up to shopping. In China, we did a cultural trip, the Great Li and Wine Village Tour, where Maurice was 'wed' in the traditional village ceremony. It was so amazing.

Aside from this cruise, the Rhapsody offers five to seven-night sailings that call on ports in Fukuoka and Kyoto, Japan, and Busan and Jeju, South Korea. Cruises are a lovely way to see several countries without the hassle of packing and repacking.

The highlight of my cruise was almost the shopping in the different ports-of-call, but it was the dinner in the Captain's Table. The Master of M/S Rhapsody, Capt. Olav Nyseter, shared his numerous adventures being to the shipping world over four decades. We enjoyed the company of three other British cruising couples.

The Royal Caribbean experience was a fantastic blast! For more information, visit www.royalcaribbean.com and www.celebritycruises.com. Call Aryan Air Inc., international Philippine representative of Royal Caribbean, at 8922703 or 8949957; e-mail rylcar@aryanair.com.ph.

EXPRESS check-in of Royal Caribbean

SEA Princess and Joanne Ramirez in life vests on the Master Drill

WELCOMED Maurice Arcache gets blessed in a traditional Chinese ceremony

ASSISTANT guest-services manager Jennifer Zafra

CHARMING scenery of backroads at Ha Long Bay, Vietnam

SPACIOUS interiors of the ocean view staterooms with private deck

HELPFUL PAL greeted service to the Hong Kong airport

COLORFUL boats for sale at Da Nang, Vietnam

Partnership for poor children

FOR MANY CHILDREN, A SIMple birthday suits easily with friends and close friends can mean the world.

Such experiences are believed to give them a better sense of belonging and improved self-esteem. This year, Abot Kamay Inc. has partnered with Jollibee to hold monthly birthday parties for more than 21,000 underprivileged Filipino children.

"These children are from poor families who normally can not afford to enjoy a Jollibee party," relates Cynthia Tiamzon, agency director of Abot Kamay.

Every month, an average of 1,500 kids under the care of Abot Kamay will celebrate their birthday with an exciting Jollibee Kids Party, the children's party of choice by many families. The parties for the monthly celebrants will be held in six Jollibee stores in Scout Bar, Quezon City, and another six in Bulacan.

The new partnership underscores Jollibee's commitment to uplifting the lives of children.

Apart from the project with Abot Kamay, Inc., Jollibee also holds the company's longest-running toy-and-book donation drive, the yearly Bladge ang Bida sa Jollibee in partnership with Aga Muhlach, which has to date benefited more than one million kids.

Abot Kamay has been operating for 18 years and is one of five children's agencies in the Philippines being supervised by Children Internet Intl.

JOLLIBEE national key accounts head Jun Salas, CI-Rizal regional controller Vijay Jankwani, Abot Kamay agency director Cynthia Tiamzon with some of the Abot Kamay kids. Jollibee, Abot Kamay, Inc. and Children International tie up for a year's worth of Jollibee Kids Parties for more than 21,000 underprivileged Filipino children.

THE 10 DAY COUNTDOWN IS ON!

Owning a Nissan X-Trail has never been easier! From February 26 to March 6, 2008, Nissan Motor Philippines, Incorporated is offering the X-Trail for as low as P102,000 down payment. For only ten days, anyone considering an SUV for their next car purchase can troop to the nearest Nissan dealership and get stunning deals for the X-Trail variant of their choice.

The Nissan X-Trail has gone through a myriad of upgrades and updates since its Philippine launch in 2002. But like a timeless classic piece, it has retained the essential features that have earned it the accolades at its class like the Real Computer Sport Utility Vehicle motor given by three different automobile award-giving bodies.

The extreme SUV features the traditional ALL-MODE 4x4 system originally developed from the legendary Nissan Skyline GTR supercar. With the first-of-a-switch, one can choose whichever configuration to use when negotiating uncompromising road conditions like floods, gridlocks and soil. The all-wheel-drive is luxurious ride with sedan-like handling - perfect for whatever road surface the city or the countryside can throw one's way.

With its smart, flexible and spacious interior, seats and rooms can load their most precious cargo – the family – in top-notch comfort. Keeping them safe is a line-up of standard safety features like dual SRS airbags, the Anti-lock Braking System and a high Intensity Cabin Structure. And speaking of the family, some X-Trail variants even come with DVD players for their entertainment pleasure so keeping the kids preoccupied during long trips or even while stuck in traffic no longer becomes a problem. Even keeping the drinks cool for each outing is taken care of by the X-Trail's innovative Drink Coolers also presented for Nissan's highly celebrated air-conditioning system. Perfect for who practical-wishable Luggage Board means one less worry for those who just want to drive in their gear and think about the next big adventure.

When it comes to the open roads, the powerful but efficient 4 and 2.0 liter engines engaged to Nissan's Continuously Variable Valve Timing Control system makes owning the X-Trail all the more fulfilling. Having up to 169ps of raw power under the hood mated to a silky-smooth 4-speed Automatic Transmission is sure to guarantee an exhilarating drive whenever the journey takes the driver.

All these are packaged in a classic brawny body design that perfectly fits an executive adventurer who is ready to take on any challenge. It is the same based-turning design that imbues on words when it comes to purpose and intention – Sport and Utility truly rolled into one.

"Making the Nissan X-Trail more accessible to the Filipino car-buyer is one of our immediate goals," says Steven Ng, Vice-President for Sales and Marketing of Nissan Motor Philippines, Inc. He adds, "The X-Trail is such a well thought out package that's why it is extremely competitive in this expanding SUV market."

Availing an X-Trail in any NMPI car within Nissan's 10 Day Countdown period also gives the proud Nissan owner a chance to win cool gadgets to keep up with the cool Nissan lifestyle. So visit the nearest Nissan Dealership now and find out how you can drive off in a stylish Nissan X-Trail, the easy way.

SM DKL—the epitome of the Robinsons Supermarket shoppes, value-wellness and fresh food.

FREE ADMISSION

Cory Quirino & SM
Present

The Amazing Wellness Day
March 8, 2008

WELLNESS DAY
Sunrise Fun Run & Exercises at San Miguel Bay
Registration - 5:30 am.
Wellness Program at the Entertainment Hall:
Entertainment, lectures, games, prizes.
Registration - 1 pm

THE AMAZING WELLNESS RACE
The first reality wellness race in the country.
Fun & excitement as you dash through a round of health, beauty and wellness stops
at the Entertainment Hall, 1 pm.

PRIZES: TOP 3 TEAMS
Grand Prize: Runaway Getaway (air tickets) for4
Second Prize: Fullawan Escape
Third Prize: Overnight stay at The Richmonde Hotel

REQUIREMENTS:
1. Team must be composed of five (5) members
2. Team may be composed of all members/brothers/sisters, 18 years old & above
3. Must be physically fit
4. All members must be fitness subscribers (prepaid/postpaid)
5. Team should have at least one mobile phone with a camera

To join, log on to: SIGN-UP NOW!
Submission every deadline: March 1, 2008

For more health, beauty & wellness tips text CQ to 2966 SMART

For more info call 09.29.68.34868

Rated Oh!

WITH HER USUAL WIT AND ENERGIC TV host-and-radio-junk-faire Oh was the perfect host for the unveiling of the Robinsons Supermarkets' new store template, which is all about eating well and spending less.

Robinsons Supermarkets is the first major local retailer to make a lifelong commitment to shoppers' health and well-being by providing wholesome options at affordable prices.

With a profound emphasis on freshness, the Galleria branch now features exciting new sections alongside an excellent selection of fresh meats and produce.

Shoppers will be delighted to find a specialty Oriental section, a fully stocked deli, drugstore, bakery for freshly baked goods, and section for homegrown "Island Influences."

"I think it's great!" Oh says about Robinsons Supermarkets' new store template. "It's very spacious, clean, there are clear signs that tell you exactly what products are on sale. And I adore the 'Down's a reminder for everything, like Whole Health, there're...plus there staff's pretty well trained and friendly. It makes shopping a lot easier and it's more pleasant."

But does Sam ever shop for herself? "I love getting groceries!" she says emphatically. "I like to go once in a while. It's one of my favorite things to do. It's like taking care of myself. I get to choose what product I want, what food I put inside my mouth...After all, it's my health and general well-being that's on the line here."

SHOPPING for beauty products is easy and convenient with labeled and brightly lit displays.

Whether she's deftly maneuvering a crowd with a mic in hand or at home, quietly contemplating her next book, the girl does it all, with an infectious joie de vivre that the rest of us can only stand by and watch with glee. And thanks to Robinsons Supermarket, the rest of us can join Sam in, as she says, "Stashing a pair of cupcakes!" by as they say "living well and spending less."

The seaside experience at the SM Mall of Asia

What—you ask of the Manila Bay area—it unfolds a treasure trove of wonderful memories – the sunset, the fresh air and scenery, friendly walks in the park with family, and for many, the thrill of buying fresh seafood in the Seaside area and having it cooked during a night.

Now, you can enjoy the Seaside experience just minutes within the Bay area's exciting new destinations, the SM Mall of Asia, in the new San Miguel by the Bay. A partnership with San Miguel Corporation and the first Lifestyle Destination Corporation, it is a ground-breaking experience where one can enjoy the breathtaking view of the sunset while having good food and company.

A 1.5 kilometer stretch with approximately 18,000 square meters in land area, San Miguel by the Bay's concept was developed with the idea of having a bona-fide seaside corridor within the busy streets of the metro.

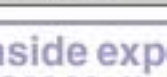
Asian cuisines are some of the best offerings of these restaurants, and you can have soul crabs and polenta cooked at garlic, chili, cornflakes, tempura, or served and sour Bisaya. These restaurants are familiar to those who are seaside an... Bahaghari Tasty, Aling Tonyo's, Sta. Elena, Abay Kainan,

Fresh squid from Wet Market

Mariano Gill, Malita, Dapeak, Ilonka, Dad and Mum, Chris, 10 Squared, and Chino de la Fuente.

Other names: Huey Yeng, Julian, Barbarossa, Bubba's Grylle, Sta. Ana Original, and Tinambac transform your seafood choices into their signature dishes.

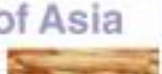
Experience the breathtaking view of the Manila Bay sunset while your pick of the freshest catch of the day cooked just the way you want it at the Seafood Village in San Miguel by the Bay. It is located at the By the Bay Leisure Park, Seaside Boulevard, Old Mall of Asia Complex.


Huey Ling's Tempura

Sweet and sour fish

Fresh catch fish of the day fried with garlic

Aling Maritess's seafood boil with tapang kalabaw


Pompano fish with special sauce

Sizzling bangus belly

Claire dela Fuente's prawn sizzling

The Seaside Pebble Strip at the San Miguel By The Bay

Inspired by the idea of an endless summer, it has a promenade, a bayside park, and lush landscape areas. Restaurants and other nautical themes give the area a resort-like look. At the heart of San Miguel by the Bay is the Aqua Lumina dancing fountain, which showcases a musical show with a light and water symphony every 15 minutes starting 6:00 P.M.

One of its attractions is what is considered to be the longest strip of restaurants facing Manila Bay in the Seaside Village. Here, one can pick The freshest catch of the day at the Wet Market and have it cooked the way you want in the restaurants in the village area.

10 years of grief . . .

From page D3

than in spite of the tremendous pain, over the last nine years he has grown me and my family the peace that passes all understanding.

No, because there will always be that void in your heart that no one else but God can fill.

No, because out of his loss, Migi's Corner, an advocacy to improve the living conditions of sick children in government hospitals, wards, and because of it, many children now have a place of solace while they heal.

No, because with the opening of each new project, you relive the reasons why the project came to be in the first place, and as it is always an emotional and teary-time.

Yes, because in spite of losing one son, we learned to love another. What comes next to love or in the heart of every child who has spent time in any of the 14 Migi Corners now in existence.

Amazed

Looking back, I continue to marvel and be amazed at how God is all-wise, all-knowing and ever gracious because He always sends consolation, and allows a message to come down from heaven every year in the week leading to his birthday since Migi left us 10 years ago.

Most of the time, it was the opening of a corner, timed perfectly with Migi's birthday.

On another it was receiving a whole box of goody bags from a donor (who did not know it was his birthday) with the words "Happy Birthday!" emblazoned on it.

Last year, it was the discovery of a video on YouTube of some of Migi's Corners, showing children with cancer playing in the corners.

This year it was the unveil on the latest Migi's Corner project, a joint venture between our foundation and my Maryknoll High School Batch '82. The Stupefiery is a major partner in this project.

The Miriam College Asylum and Breastfeeding Center, the first of its kind in the country, is a daycare to be used by the children of the employees of Miriam College. Integrated to a breastfeeding center that will be made open to Miriam students and single mothers who study at the college. The center will be opened this March 10.

All of Migi's Corners have murals that depict Migi and his favorite characters to welcome smiles...inside the area, the park, in a forest, on a beach, at the circus.

Moral

Last week, as I stood to gaze at the just-completed mural...painted lovingly by my friends (who have done almost all the murals for the 14 corners): Pen, 'dmai, Sid and some of their other friends from classmates of the Philippines and University of Sto. Tomas-Fine Arts—I could not help but smile at the may God wrinkle.

Unknown to them, at the time that they painted the mural, I had just completed a children's story for publication later this year, about our family's experiences. I excerpt here a portion of the story...

"Migi was smaller than other kids his age but he was very smart—four years old—8 years old. He could run as fast, or climb trees, but he loved to read a lot and he enjoyed telling stories. He loved reading about dinosaurs and knew all their names by heart. Migi could name you all the dinosaurs in the whole wide world in a flash!

"One time, mommy thought him a trickier book of dinosaurs and he made them all over our bedroom. ...

"On his bed, ... on the chairs ... on his computer... his bookshelves and on the walls."

"Migi and I liked to play a special game. Before entering our room, we believe he would place his arm across the door and say, 'What's the magic word, mo?' And I would reply, 'God is good all the time!' Only then would he open the gate, and let me in. Oh how we loved to play all sorts of games!"

To add to my answers to the questions on whether it becomes easy to lose a son after almost 20 years, I say no, because a mother never forgets her child. You do what you can to get through the days, weeks, months and years as you move from a place of sadness to a place of hope.

Yes, there is time for me to be a ate, because God always sends his comfort and, in spite of everything, He is good all the time.

Edelblute (www.edelblute.net), a workshop and support group for anyone who has lost a loved one through death, is organizing at the Greenhills Christian Fellowship Church every Friday at 6:30 p.m. Call 6222 204 or 58 to reserve a slot free of charge.

E-mail the author at arlyn@edelblute.net

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Milestones

DAVID-SAMSON

Mark Anhil David, son of Hermie Badiko and Divina David, exchanged vows recently with Leah G. Samson, daughter of Rodolfo and Erlinda Samson, at The Lakeshore Estate Lighthouse Pointe made in Mexico, Pampanga. Pattie Bonoan Alba and Michael Junquin officiated at the ceremonies. Photo coverage was by Paul Maverik delos Reyes. Reception was held at The Lakeshore Estate Lakeview Peninsula.

CASIN-TUMAON

Alfred B. Casin, son of Federico and Adelia Casin, and Anne Bernadette T. Tumaon, daughter of Bernardo and Ma. Teresita Tumaon, exchanged vows recently at St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Marilao, Bulacan. Reception was held at Alexandria Garden, St. Francis Subd. Meycauayan, Bulacan.

MECESITO-ARANDIA

Bobby E. Mecesito, son of Adriano and Zenaida Mecesito of Aurora Province, and Llewelyn Magno Arandia, daughter of Ed and Sheilah Arandia of Alaminos City, Pangasinan, exchanged vows recently at St. Joseph Cathedral, Alaminos City, Pangasinan. Reception was held at Villa de Sur Mar Hotel & Restaurant, Lucap, Alaminos City, Pangasinan.

EMILY'S POST
Emily Marcelo

In-laws are mean to her

DEAR EMILY,

I am in my 30s, a college graduate and now a stay-at-home mom. I had a very lucrative business years ago but was convinced by an investment scam.

What was reason I discovered who are my real friends were, relatives included.

My mother-in-law became so mean to us when we could not give her money anymore though she had children who were based abroad.

It was always about the money. She married us to leave their Manila home—where we stayed—even if we were the only ones left in the main house.

She stays in the province and goes to Manila for her checkup. My sister-in-law lives in the other side of the house. She hates our husband for no reason whatsoever. They are not on speaking terms. I tried real hard to please her but she already made up her mind that she did not like me.

Mother and daughter even talk behind my back. I've learned about it from my helpers.

Months ago my helpers told me that mother-in-law's maid was having an affair with my sister-in-law's husband. The helper sleeps with the guy when co-in-law brings her kid to school early in the morning.

Apparently, sis-in-law is so mean to her husband and she is now the butt of jokes among the helpers. Mom-in-law's maid is now pregnant, though she says the child is her boyfriend's who stays in the province and seldom comes to the city.

I know this subject is sis-in-law's husband. Do I tell my mom-mom- and sis-in-law about this?

Oh well, I just want to get even with the two witches in my life...

ELSIE

Mooooowwww.... grrrrrr!!! Most like a cat fight you are having with your in-laws!

I cannot blame you for feeling wicked toward those two fit. Whose imagination will not run wild with vengeance just to get even with them?

I'm lovely sarcastic/snide that quite of us you have no recourse but to imagine doing an eye for an eye with such appropriate people—though not might feel this "treatment" be them.

But hold your horses. Having the good Samaritan might even blow up in your face. Do you honestly think that the motives and the actions will appreciate your good intentions? Not when they already have this attitude toward you.

It is going to be a least four situation, however you look at it.

Blood will always be thicker than water and there will be no winners here, no matter what.

Continue playing by your rules. Just as this one out—and enjoy the view. It is no skin off your nose and therefore none of your business.

They have their problems—you have yours. Amen.

E-mail the author at emarcelo@inquirer.com.ph, Subject: Lifestyle, or send your letters to Inquirer, Lep on to www.ph.gov.ph and Inquirer to the Intercept, or hand the magazine "Kalikasan," Pigafetta," 7:15-6:00 p.m., Monday-Friday, or dial 897.134.2 PHE

SEN. HELENA Benitez (second from left) with Ambassador Rosario Manalo, Ambassador Laura Baja Jr., PWU president Amalou B. Bayot, Amalia B. Go, Ambassador Alistair Ball McDonald of the European Commission, Marina Baja, Dilda Gonzales, Rubenia Recuenco of the Department of Foreign Affairs and PWU chancellor Dolores Baja-Lanot

PURELY PERSONAL
Josephine Dorong

St. Joseph's powerful intercession

IT WAS NOT OUT of mere whim that my mother, Lourdes Clemente Dorong, named me Josephine.

She was a devotee of St. Joseph and her own father was named José (Clemente). One of my brothers is named José. He is now head of the Social Studies Department of Bonn Navis High School in Lamag City.

Perhaps, my mother's prayers to St. Joseph made it possible for her children to finish school. St. Joseph truly helped.

Dr. Danilo Trinidad Reyes, president of the Friends of St. Joseph Foundation, was encouraged by his mother to pray to St. Joseph after he was still young. "Doctor Trinidad sila, de Reyes nurse the green roof of St. Joseph as the brand blaze everyday.

Danny continued to pray to St. Joseph, especially when he made important decisions like when he got married. Josefina Tengco Reyes, his wife, is also a devotee of the saint. They donate images of St. Joseph to churches and parishes. Text 0917.8125168 or call 9113912.

Danny, who presents in March the exhibit of St. Joseph images at Ilocandia de San José, promises to do so for the rest of his life. Novena Masses will be held March 4, 11, 6 p.m. The public is invited.

Terrace of Jesus."

"Those who practice prayer should have a special devotion to St. Joseph's Rosary. I do not know how anyone can think of the Queen of the Angels, during the time that she suffered so much with the Child Jesus, without giving thanks to Saint Joseph for the way he helped them. If anyone cannot find a manner to touch him to repay, let him take this glorious saint as his master and he will not go astray."

St. Teresa walked again after she was paralyzed by praying to St. Joseph.

Pinoy Brigittine monk

In 2007, a 37 year-old Filipino, Brother Bernard Sugtatan, became the first Filipino born in the Philippines to be a Brigittine monk. Bro's is based in the Sorath of the children of Wenceslao and Josefina Sugtatan. He was christened Arnold but Sugtatan but chose the name Bernard when he became a monk.

The call to the religious life must have begun when he founded a Catholic young adult group called Bathalahang Pinoy (Philippines). Blessed Giorgio Pier Frassati of Italy was a young man who chose the religious life and gave up his wealthy lifestyle.

Arnold must have been inspired by him because he eventually joined the Third Order Carmelites. He is also a member of the Association of the Miraculous Medal, the Militia Immaculata, the Seraphic Confraternity and the Universal Archconfraternity of St. Philomena. He worked for a research agency before joining the Brigittines.

The Order of the Most Holy Saviour, the Brigittines, was founded by St. Bridget of Sweden in the 14th century. Wars, plagues and accident almost brought the monks to extinction in the middle of the 19th century.

A priory of monks was established in the United States by Brothers Benedict Kirby in 1974.

Lourdes devotion

When we were young, we called women wearing white dresses with blue sashes and medals of Our Lady of Lourdes nuns, an honorific word manifesting devotion to Our Lady of Lourdes. My mother Lourdes was one of them.

I did not know I would be one of them until I joined the Saint Dominic Chapter of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Lourdes in Las Piñas. It must have been the Holy Spirit coaching us that day because I felt a strong affinity to Mama Mary under this title.

Other new members are Dr. Walter Campos, Aubrey Lupton and Spanish professor José Cimbala. I remember that when I visited Lourdes, France, in 1997, other pilgrims and I waited patiently to go inside the bathing house where the miraculous spring water flowed. We prayed the Holy Rosary in different languages.

When I was finally submerged in the frozen cold water, I prayed for healing. To this day I feel Our Lady of Lourdes' presence. My membership in the confraternity is my way of thanking her.

Holy Land trip

A monk from Monasterio de Tuc has will lead pilgrims to the Holy Land, Egypt and Jordan May 12-21. The pilgrimage is organized by Rafi. Text 0906-2395166.

Lenten recollection

Fr. Jojo Fronda will be the resolution master of the Holy Souls Church 8, 6 a.m.-5 p.m., at the chapel of the Manila Doubling Bank, corner Edsa and Quezon Avenue. Theme is to Hope is our Salvation. Call 531.2357.

Wellness

Dr. Teresa Velosa, a natural medicine specialist, is open for appointments Thursdays, 2 p.m., in her clinic opposite Ayala Alabang Town Center and Makati Supermarket. Call 8217972 or 4072167.

SUNDAY CROSSWORD

PREMIER CROSSWORD/ By Frank A. Longo — SWITCH

answer on page C3

FILARES-RAMOS

Lawyer Ricardo Pilares III, son of lawyer Ricardo and Dr. Yolanda Pilares, will exchange vows with lawyer Ricbie Arigalo Ramos, daughter of Ruben and Lydia Ramos, on March 15 at Palacio de Maynila. 1675 M.H. del Pilar, Malate, Manila.

Milestones

SUZUKI DEBUT

Alba Suzuki, daughter of Mariene Digsangan of Las Piñas City to Suzuki, celebrated her 15th birthday at the Cite Ballroom of Cavite's Bonanza, Imus, BF Homes Village, Las Piñas City. The debutante wore gowns designed by Edgar Bauzon of Oblazon.

Breakthrough Medical Solution to a Serious Cosmetic Medical Problem

A soothing salon experience

SINCE ITS OPENING IN WESTgate Center, Filinvest, Alabang, in 2005, and most recently at Trinoma Mall, Quezon City, the Acqua salon has earned a reputation for attracting first-time clients as well as faithful ones. These satisfied customers explain why:

Rosinta Uriz-Gonzales describes her last spa treatment as divine. "The experience starts the moment you are brought in their shampoo area," says Rosinta, who was seen at Acqua's Westgate branch. "It's a mini recliner where you lie down to have your hair washed. The lift bed combines to your back, I didn't want to leave!" As for the service itself, the salon is chief of Mario Wedding: was more than happy. "The hair spa left my hair replenished and my scalp cool and tingly."

Mitchie Jawdat and Philippine Star columnist Michelle Ibayo-Sobrevi are "feeling frazzled" on the day of her new shop's official opening in Trilumina. Luckily help was there steps away. "Acqua's atmosphere was so calming and the staff was so warm. The moment they started to shampoo my hair on their flat shampoo bed, I felt so relaxed," she says. The good feeling extended all the ways to her room. "Thanks to my hair and makeup," she avers. "I felt so beautiful and confident all throughout our Mitchie'sicio blessing!"

Self-described blabbit girl Ana Ligaya gladly leaves a trip to Alabang, if only for

MICHELLE Ibayo-Sobrevi

ADRIANA Uriz-Gonzales

Acqua senior stylist MJ Cabacisc, who took care of Ana's hair in another salon. "She color sometimes while closely watching and observing your hair's texture, weight and color," says Ana. "When she finishes her contemplative analysis, she looks to and begins cutting in a layered manner. And voila! Out comes the perfect cut. It was only natural for me to follow her to Alabang." The salon's other perks she make a visit to the much worthwhile. "Acqua is efficient, straightforward and unpretentious. The staff is well-trained and helpful. And their stylists are experienced and possess good fundamentals in hair management and styling skills."

Yet ever-Celestia Lagbanoc, it took a single visit to convince her this salon was a keeper. "I was impressed with the professionalism of their staff, their cleanliness and their service," says this Acqua Westgate regular. "They know how to handle each customer. Even if I walk in without an appointment and have to wait a short time, I don't really mind. I like their ambiance, their music selection, and the coffee or tea they offer just makes my every visit so relaxing. Plus, they're open till 8 p.m. so my husband and I book the last appointments after work."

Acqua Salon is at Westgate Center in Filinvest Alabang (772-1360), and 2/L Milestone Wing, Trilumina Mall, Quezon City (533-0381).

"Ito ang best deal:
Payless,
Get more!"

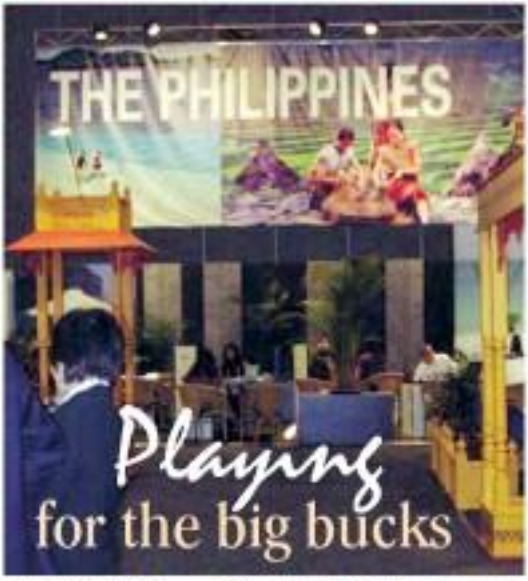
Kung ganon, naiintriga ka dito! Pagdating sa instant noodles, may brand na may "Special Offer" sayo-sayo!

Pagdating sa noodles, walang hindi sa pagkasiki ang Payless. Iniyon na, sa presyong mas mura, mas malami kang makukuha! Good deal, 'di ba?

Sabi nga ni Carmina, "Di mapagkakaila na 'Best Value' ang Payless Pancit Canton. Mas malami ang laman ng Payless kaysa ibang brands ... sa presyong abot-kaya! Saysay, lalo pang pinasarap ang lasa at noodles nito kaya mas enjoy kainin ang Original, Extra Hot & Spicy, Chili-crunch at Kalamansi Flavour ng Payless Pancit Canton. "Super Offer" naman ang Payless Busog Sarap Bowl dahil mas malapit ito nang 54% kaysa other brands na kasing halaga nito. Abakan mo, ang isang Payless instant bowl ay "sing dami ng isa't kalahating bowls. Mas malalaman ka talaga! Dinagdagan pa 'to ng 11 vitamins at minerals, kaya mas busog ka rin sa sustansya. May masarap na Bakla se Batchoy Flavour pa ang Payless Busog Sarap Bowl."

Para sa kanya, obvious na kung ano ang best deal! Bakit ka pa pipili ng iba? Kuha Payless, Get More!

Sunday LIFESTYLE Travel



Playing for the big bucks

MORE than 3,000 people attended the 2008 AIME at the Melbourne Convention Exhibition Centre.

ONE of the bridges spanning Melbourne's Yarra River looks like a space ship from a distance.

Text and photos by Linda B. Bohda

THEY WERE TALKING MICE in Melbourne recently but not because it is the Year of the Rat.

Mice actually stands for meetings, incentives, conventions and events. Representatives of more than 45 countries, including the Philippines, were in the capital of the Australian state of Victoria for the 16th Asia-Pacific Incentive and Meeting Expo (Aime) held at the Melbourne Exhibition Centre.

Of the total of 658 exhibitors, 240 were new. The Philippines had participated in almost half of the annual staging of the event, including the first.

But this year, the Philippine delegation, under the leadership of the Department of Tourism, was one of the few groups that merited special mention from Rosemarie Sanna, event director.

Larger space

Over lunch with hosted media people and buyers, Sanna cited as an indication of the importance given to Aime by participants the fact that the "Philippines had taken up a large space," almost doubling the size of its booth.

Thanks to Carmencita Jones, the country's tourism attaché in Australia, it was also strategically located—at the end of the long corridor where it could be readily seen by visitors entering through the main doors.

The groups that comprised the Philippine delegation, headed by Tourism Undersecretary Edwardo Jarque Jr., also more than doubled compared to last year.

Joining the DOT team that included Regina Tolentino Pardo Antonetti, Bureau of Domestic Tourism operations officer Liliosa B. Lizardo, were representatives of Intas Destinations, Trips Travel, Philippine International Convention Center, Travelvision, Cosmos Plaza Galleria, Cebu Holiday Tours & Travel, Inc., Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa, Subic Bay Metropolitan Authority, Philippine Air Lines and Zubbel Philippine Plaza.

THE PHILIPPINE delegation's dinner after AIME was attended by, among others, (from) Francis of Travel Vision, Gilicon Wicks of Philippine Business-Links Pty, Ltd. Melbourne, honorary consul Raul Fernandez, Tourism Undersecretary Eduardo Jarque and tourism attaché Carmencita Jones.

THE BEAUTIFUL St. Patrick's Cathedral

It was obvious from the start that Aime was unlike other travel expositions and fairs. Much like in speed-dating, the public-address system constantly reminded people to move on after 15 minutes of talking shop with whatever group.

It seemed appropriate somehow as talks revolved primarily around issues related to business and corporate affairs.

Taking the f-out of Mice

The Philippines, while hoping to get some modest share of the MICE meetings, conventions, events) aspects of Mice, was primarily targeting the I—incentives.

With all the tournament other countries were pushing non-convention and meeting places, hailing larger and larger edifices with state-of-the-art audio-visual technology, the playing field was no easy level for the country in terms of meetings, conventions and events.

But the Philippines felt competitive in the area of incentive travels.

These are trips awarded by businesses and corporations to high-achieving, major performing employees and associates, rewards for jobs well done and resources earned.

The object is primarily R & R, rest and relaxation, to give corporate warriors a chance to recharge their batteries and de-stress away from the pressures of the corporate world.

Predetermined by days of just lazing about in luxury, it is expected that those prized corporate execs would be fit, willing and ready to return—and win the biz once Jesus knows which new ones.

Needing to keep these people loyal and highly motivated, companies virtually use the sky as the limit for each trip, according to Jarque and Jones.

The best

Only the very best would do for these pampered, valued travellers... posh accommodations, haute cuisine, luxurious vehicles, excellent and personalized service.

Though incentive travellers were not as attention-grabbing as leisure and pleasure visitors, they accounted for significant tourism receipts precisely because of their first-class requirements, Jarque said.

"These are big spenders, high-end travellers. They do not go by buses but by vans, limousines even," Jarque said.

Jones said negotiating for incentive travel might be "close, but it is profitable," with group size ranging from 20 to several hundreds.

Indeed, the groups could be quite large. Boracay and Cebu, the second preferred incentive travel destinations in the country after Manila, had hosted groups ranging from 200-1,400.

"They are worth the time, effort and resources," Jones said of this special group of travellers. "They may account for only a small share of foreign arrivals but they represent large returns (on investment)."

Boracay said her region had played host to corporate travellers from as close as Hong Kong to as far as Europe.

Jarque said things were looking up for the country in the area of incentive travel.

Many of the "buyers" at Aime said "they have put the Philippines on their short lists of incentive travel destinations," the undersecretary reported.

The Philippines wants to attract more corporate warriors on R&R

MELBOURNE from a helicopter

THE TRAM routes on Flinders Street, an important city landmark

ALBERTO Lekaroz, director of sales of Shangri-La's Mactan Resort & Spa, talks to a prospective client.

DAVID Ian Jamieson, resident manager of Crowne Plaza Galleria Manila, main the pitch for the hotel.

SENIOR tourism operations officer Liliosa B. Lizardo is swished by a Mercure poster.

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Emmie G. Velarde

INSIDE

- Online chat with Harry Connick Jr Inquirer Exclusive /H4
- 2 finalists quit Cinemalaya over casting and finance problems /F5

'My Big Love' star says he was 'pretty chubby' in high school

Fear of fat keeps Sam fit

By Marinel R. Cruz

"I'M SCARED OF GETTING FAT," SAID SAM Milby. Per his latest project...he had to wear a fat suit reminiscent of Eddie Murphy in "Norbit."

In the movie "My big love," Sam plays obese chef Blasky, who struggles to be fit to get the beautiful Nina (Jerome Ilustrisimo) to fall in love with him. Helping him meet his goal is the strong-willed Nina, a fitness instructor, portrayed by Toni Gonzaga.

"Actually, I was pretty chubby in high school," said Sam, who claims to have worked in a fast-food restaurant where he gained a lot of weight. "I'm now a very health-conscious person. If only for my career, I have to stay in shape. I have to look well."

Here are Sam's thoughts, which he shared in a recent meeting with the show biz press:

How similar are you to the character you play?

I don't know how to answer that pagkatong sa sumatra. But in terms of Blasky's loving shy, parang ganu'. The fat suit I wear in the movie is like a mask. What you'll see in the movie while I'm wearing it is more of myself—outside.

How did you internalize the role?

My first assignment was to study big people—how they walk, hand over... it was difficult to tie my shoes while I was in the suit. Joe Laporta, our prosthetics guy, helped me a lot with my character. He said he used to be very big himself. He knew exactly how to react in the situations that we presented.

Would you get fat just to see if a girl really cares for you?

I don't think I'd actually do that. First off, I have a show biz career. I don't think I'd be working as much if I gained a lot of weight. I think I would just have to trust the girl...that she would really love me.

How do you handle big disappointments in love?

I just pray.

What is the lesson that the movie is trying to convey?

It says that being fat or being unseen should not stop you from loving.

You admitted falling for Toni a few years ago. Is she not averse to fighting for?

She is. And I did have strong feelings for her. But I was new in the business and didn't

Not trying to be Seacrest

By Rayzel Sol Obiso Jr.

"STAR HOST RAYMOND Gutierrez is not trying to be a clone of his "American Idol" counterpart.

That's not to say he has found nothing to emulate in Ryan Seacrest.

"If there's one thing I appreciate about him, it's that, as AI, it's as if he isn't there," Raymond told Inquirer Entertainment during "Pinoy Idol's" auditions in Cebu recently. "He just pops in and out at the right moments. Contestants and viewers are never overwhelmed with him."

I've never like to do it that way, too, Raymond said. Looks like he's succeeding in this department. Already he's been photographed and filmed with sopranos and

progress crew alike, fully enjoying himself.

"I never understand how the contestants feel—I was it immediately if they've said, or just nervous," the singer host said.

Actually, he added, it was he that first opened up to the crowd. "They reciprocated. They became relaxed, and started to express their real feelings."

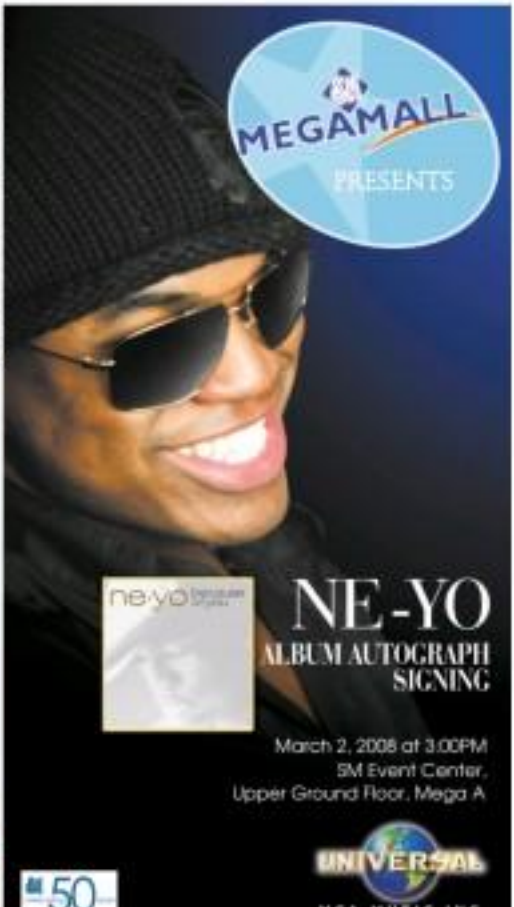
There are hectic days and nights for Richard Gutierrez's affable twin. Half of the week he's on helicopter-hopping for the "Idol" auditions; the other half, he's hosting GMA-7's "SOP" and "Showbiz Central" and QTV's "Living it Up."

He wouldn't complaining, he said. But he admitted that there were "lots of fears and pressure" at the start. "Now, I've decided to simply enjoy the experience."

He couldn't tell where he was getting the energy to "drive 4 hours, 1 either drink coffee or sleep. I've been working every day lately."

The touring is a journey of discovery for Raymond.

"I was just telling Arlene (Magdangal, one of three



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GALLERIA

1 KITE RUNNER + THX
1130 1230 1330 1430 1530 1630

2 LUHM in ANTONIO
1200 1300 1400 1500 1600

3 MY BIG LOVE
1130 1230 1330 1430 1530 1630

4 THE WATER HORSE
1200 1300 1400 1500 1600

5 Reserved for VICTORY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP 1130 1230

6 Reserved for VICTORY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP 1130 1230

7 THE FLOCK 1130 1330
3:15 TO YUMA 1530 1630

8 DAN in REAL LIFE 1130 1230 1330 1430 1530 1630
PRIVATE MOMENTS 1530 1630 1730 1830 1930 2030

9 JUMPER 1430 1630
WANTAGE POINT 1330 1530 1730

10 DAN in REAL LIFE 1130 1230 1330
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3 KITE RUNNER
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4 ASSASSINATION of JESSE JAMES 1130 1230
JUMPER 1030 1330 1630 1930

5 MY BIG LOVE
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6 DAN in REAL LIFE
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1 3:10 TO YUMA
2 THE FLOCK
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4 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND

DASMARIÑAS

1 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
2 JUMPER / THE BUCKET LIST
3 MY BIG LOVE
4 THE WATER HORSE

IMUS

1 JUMPER
2 THE WATER HORSE
3 MY BIG LOVE
4 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND

ANGELES

1 THE WATER HORSE
2 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
3 27 DRESSES
4 MY BIG LOVE

TARLAC

1 ALVIN and the CHIPMUNKS
2 JOHN RAMBO
3 AMERICAN GANGSTER

STARMILLS

1 ONE MISSED CALL
2 MY BIG LOVE
3 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
4 27 DRESSES / THE BUCKET LIST
5 THE WATER HORSE
6 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

BACOLOD

1 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 MY BIG LOVE
3 THE WATER HORSE
4 27 DRESSES
5 JUMPER
6 WANTAGE POINT

ILOILO

1 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
2 THE WATER HORSE
3 MY BIG LOVE
4 JUMPER / 27 DRESSES
5 MY BEST FRIEND's GIRLFRIEND
6 WANTAGE POINT

ROUNDUP

Censored footage

"ARSENIC PANIC...SOON AT Sipayan," a collection of racy scenes from movies produced by Lee Films from the 1980s to 2003, will premiere at the Gateaway of the Philippines Film Institute on March 8 at 3 p.m., 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. This will be followed by a limited, exclusive run at Salas...son's Gallery, Robinson's Place (Manila) and Robinson's Baesilan.

Censored and never-been-seen footage from films starring sex starlights from the last decades part from the collections.

A matinee (actor Boy Alvarez) scenes against the film scenes and the phenomenon of cold movies.

Tickets at P300 are available at the LVN box office.

Filmmaking education

The Hanbon Glue-Abaya Film Institute and Arts Center discusses the science, art and business of feature filmmaking campus in an "international standard film education" course in Beverly Hills Subdivision, Antipolo City.

The "mobile" classroom walls extends to the industrial studios, laboratories and professional shooting sets of faculty members.

Registration is ongoing for the next term, which begins in June.

Log on to www.mobilefilm.com.

Mobile entertainment

AVC is set to launch its 2008 mobile entertainment line with a product exhibit at the SM Mall of Asia main lobby from March 6 to 16.

On display are car audio video devices, among them the AVC-611, which was judged winner in the 2008 Consumer Electronics Association Innovations Award for its multimedia features and unique design.

Just like the most popular portable MP3 players, the AVC-611 provides an extensive split screen display of searchable options such as playlists, albums and even song categories.

The new products will be available soon in the local market.

'Horton' screening

"Horton," an adaptation of Dr. Seuss' 1954 children's book, "Horton Hears a Who," will have an exclusive sneak screening on March 8 at Greenbelt cinemas.

The movie is about an imaginative elephant named Jo Jo (Carrey) who hears a cry for help coming from a tiny speck of dust.

The movie features three comedy stars—Carrey, Steve Carell and Carol Burnett.

The 2008 Century Fox movie, to be distributed by Warner Bros., opens on March 22 in theaters nationwide.

"LAURA in Paris"

Pacquiao-Marquez match

The rematch between Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez live from the Mandalay Bay Events Center in Las Vegas, Nevada will be shown in The Ballroom of Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila on March 16, 8 a.m. For an entrance fee of P800 net, the event can be witnessed on a 10-foot projector screen. Popcorn and hot dog will be served, with free flowing soda and beer.

Controversial films

The University of the Philippines College of Mass Communication (UP CMC) will host a film festival titled "Director's Cut: Mga Likalang Digital Mong Sukdu Ibro: ..." from March 5 to 7 at the Cine Adarna in UP Diliman, Quezon City.

To be screened are:

Joel Lamangan's "Hubo Ilay Sa Kapas Na?" (March 5, 3 p.m.), about a transsexual masseuse's love affair with the insecurity of her family.

Maryo J. de los Reyes' "Lumpo" (March 5, 7 p.m.), about a couple's problems caused by a sick business woman who lusts for the husband, and a gigolo who seduces the wife.

Jay Altarejos' "Ang Lahat sa Pamilya" (March 7, 9 p.m.), about a light house caretaker in a conservative village community who falls for another man as his girlfriend struggles to win him back.

Gin Pilak's "Tarlac Tondo" (March 6, 5 p.m.), a tale of infidelity and deception between two sons.

Connie Macatuno's "Serene and Jailer" (March 6, 7 p.m.), about the romantic journey of two women caught in webs of forbidden and unconventional love.

Mel Chionglo's "Twilight Dancers" (March 6, 9 p.m.), about a macho dancer pressured to "dance" to the tune of the neo-global economy.

Chito Rono's "La Vida Rosa" (March 7, 5 p.m.), about a couple's life as one strains knowing complicated sex relations coming.

Jeffrey Jetturian's "Tabog" (March 7, 7 p.m.), a disturbing movie within a movie where a mother and daughter are abused twice.

Jose Javier Reyes' "Live Show" (March 7, 9 p.m.), about impoverished men and women who perform sexual acts in front of paying customers.

YJ Jhunt

Those who want to follow in the footsteps of MTV VJs Iya Villania or Audrey Felix may sign up for the Homes Beach 2008 YJ Hunt.

Applicants 18-26 years old may submit a one- to two-minute video that shows their VJ skills as they talk about the entertainment circuit.

Log on to versusmovies.com.ph. Deadline for submission of videos is April 5 at 11:59:59 p.m.

Winners will co-host a segment with a MYX VJ, appear in "Star MYX" and win an all-expense paid trip to Boracay plus P50,000 pocket money.

'Jumper' hits P35.5M

The action thriller "Jumper" topped the local box office when it opened February with 1,008 print of (P1.1 million each cinema).

The movie earned P35.5 million for the first five days in Metro Manila, Cebu, Davao, Iloilo, Bacolod, Cagayan, Subic, Baguio, Batangas and Cavite.

"Jumper" is about David (Hayden Christensen), a young man who discovers he can "jump" or teleport anywhere in the blink of an eye.

"Horton"

"Jumper"

MMTA MOVIE GUIDE

MOVIE MANIA THEATER ASSOCIATION

NOW SHOWING

Olympics probe

TABLOIDESQUE NOTEBOOK: "MITO CHINA Unveiled and Lola Reigns, takes an in-depth look at why the much-coveted Olympic gold medals remain elusive for the country.

It produces only two Olympic champs: Naida has not brought home a single gold medal accomplishment.

The show airs on March 4 after "Idol" on GMA-7.

Designers' tilt

The competition reality series "Project Runway" returns with a new crop of 10 up-and-coming designers for a fourth season.

Selected from thousands of hopefuls, the designers will compete for the opportunity to showcase their talent in Bryant Park at New York's Fashion Week.

The show airs Thursdays, from 8:30 to 9:30 p.m. and encores every Sunday at 7 p.m. on Discovery Travel & Living.

Industrial recovery

"Oil, booze and rigs" is the story of one of the greatest industrial recovery and repair operations ever done in the Second World War.

It is also the untold epic story behind the headlines about soaring oil prices and of the brave men and women who have been linked with recurring cycles.

The program airs Tuesdays at 10 p.m., with encores on Wednesdays at 1 a.m., 6 a.m. and 3 p.m. on Discovery Channel.

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Fear of fat keeps Sam fit

From page F1

know how to handle all those things concerning show biz. I was so lean with result. Ritz everything that's going on, with the pressure that we we're having from everyone, it just wasn't later best too complicated. It was the best idea na merging magkahiwalay kung kami.

And he still busy with work now, but your relationship with your current girl friend Jessa Zaviz is going strong.

Now that I've been in the business for two years, I more or less know how to handle my schedule.

If you got involved with Toni now, do you think the relationship would work?

I said, really say 'life's both in (other) relationships right now.

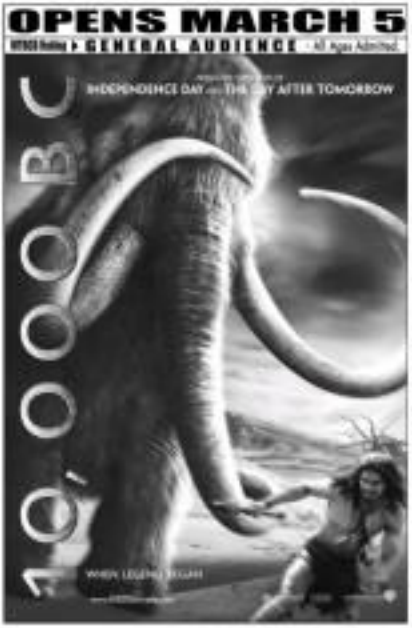
Would you rather be really hit or really skinny?

I'd rather be this. First off, I love food. If I get too skinny at least all I'd do is eat. Like making pamayat.

What advice would you give an overweight friend?

Others would say work out. But I would say eat good and stick to it. You don't even have to go to the gym. You can lose weight by following the right diet...less carbs and sugar, etc.

Jade Gamboa's "My Big Love," produced by Star Cinema, is now showing in theaters nationwide. (Email: nerza@inquirer.com.ph)



Not trying...

From page F1

judges that every day I learn something new about Pinoys. For instance, how supportive the families are. You could say I've always known this, but now I've actually experienced it."

He has also noted some very marked differences between Americans and Filipinos.

Raymond explained, "I'm Americanized, 'I'm Americanized,' there are a lot of crazy comments. Some even quarrel with the judges. This is much like you about Pinoys."

But he's had a few close encounters of the heavy kind. "In Iloilo, someone questioned the judges' decision," he recalled. "He had a lot of anger while I was interviewing him. (Another one) in Cebu just left in a huff. I couldn't talk to him. The staff said he was cursing all the way out of the venue."

(E-mail: bcastro@inquirer.com.ph/bernardcastro@yahoo.com)

AT THE CINEMAS

GLORIETTA 1	1 THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES (PG)	2 THE FLOCK (R-13)	3 MY BIG LOVE (PG)	4 MY BIG LOVE
GLORIETTA 4	1 THE WATER HORSE	2 SAW III REAL LIFE	3 VINTAGE POINT	
	4 THE KITE RUNNER	5 10,000 BC / MY BIG LOVE	6 MY BIG LOVE	7 THE FLOCK
GREENBELT 1	1	2		
GREENBELT 3	1 JUMPER	2 VINTAGE POINT		
	3 JUMPER	4 THE WATER HORSE	5 SAW III REAL LIFE	
ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 SAW III REAL LIFE		
	3 THE WATER HORSE	4 THE KITE RUNNER / SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES	5 VINTAGE POINT	
AYALA CENTER CINEMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE WATER HORSE	3 ONE MISSED CALL	4 JUMPER
MARKET! MARKET!	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 THE FLOCK		
	3 JUMPER	4 THE WATER HORSE	5 MY BIG LOVE	
TRINOMA	1 MY BIG LOVE	2 VINTAGE POINT	3 MY BIG LOVE	4 THE KITE RUNNER / SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES
	5 THE FLOCK	6 SAW III REAL LIFE	7 THE WATER HORSE	

AT THE MALLS

Ayala Malls

Glorietta — SM Installment Madness, Feb 28 to Mar. 9, Glorietta Activity Center

Greenbelt — Greenbelt 3 Cinema Theatre Presents: BROADWAY SHOWSTOPPERS, March 6, 8pm, Greenbelt 3 Park

Alabang Town Center — Totally Spies live at Alabang Town Center, March 8pm, Dinner, and Rest of Alabang Town Center, February 29 to March 2, 11am, 1pm & 4pm, Activity Center

Ayala Center Cebu — HIS & HERS PROMO, February 15 to March 15

Market! Market! — Totally Spies live at Market! Market!, March 1, 5 & 9, 1pm, 3:30 & 6:30pm, Activity Center

Onstage — Repertory Philippines presents ROMANCE IN G, February 29 to March 16, 2008

Ayala Museum — Third Asian Biennial of the Asian International Art Exhibition, beginning until March 9, 2008

Tri Noma — Ambient Sounds at the Trees, Enjoy beautiful music this February as you dine alfresco at Trilogy, Feb. 26, 6pm, Ani Love Trilogy Park

2 finalists quit Cinemalaya

By Marinel R. Cruz

TWO OF THE 10 FINALISTS in this year's Cinemalaya Philippine Independent Film Festival have decided to drop out of the competition.

Mariano Dela Cruz, whose film "14H4455" tells of the struggles of migrant workers in the country, backed out due to problems in shooting, the film's writer Raymond Lee said Inquirer Entertainment on Friday.

Edith Amoroso, director of "Ilaw sipsaway Bituag," who also withdrew from the festival, pointed to the lack of a scriptwriter & directing scheme. Her film tells of a woman's brief encounter with four entrepreneurs who escaped from a farming home.

Subdivisions

Taking Dela Cruz's slot is Jay Medio, whose film "Numero" is a love story of two chefs fighting over the rights to a menu item.

Critically acclaimed director Ellen Ongkiko-Marfil is getting the other slot. Her film, titled "Hasaan," is the story of a violinist who comes from a traumatic relationship and who works in a shelter for abused children, where he finds a child prodigy.

"We're afraid to not move the deadline. This is the kind of project that lives or dies depending on certain schedules," Lee said of Dela Cruz's film.

Indian cast

"14H4455" is the story of a freight stowaway finally called Jimmy Parkalin, who faces the challenges of finding a more permanent source of home and country for his children. The film examines the colorful stories of the Indian minority in the country.

EPIC Pictures, the film's producer, scheduled scenes of auditions for Filipino-Indian actors, but no one turned up, said Lee.

The tabled cast shows are four main characters in the film. Jimmy, in his early 40s, is the lovable father of two. He is amiable, speaks fluent English and rides a motorcycle.

Jimmy's son, between 18 to 21, is rebellious but loving. He takes on family responsibility at a young age and learns how to ride a motorcycle.

Jimmy's daughter, born in the Philippines, has a growing desire to know about her Indian origin. She is sweet, funny smart, dances well and speaks Tagalog fluently. She can be from 9 to 13.

Private cut

The son's wife, aged between 17 and 21, is a two children and strongly willed. She will insist an Indian dancer in the course of shooting the film.

"They don't have to be professional actors. We are willing to work with them step by step," Lee said. "This could be the first Filipino film such an all-Indian cast."

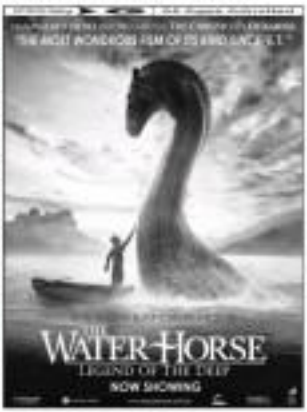
Lee said interested actors may e-mail DFO@yahoo.ie or call 0917-3058840.

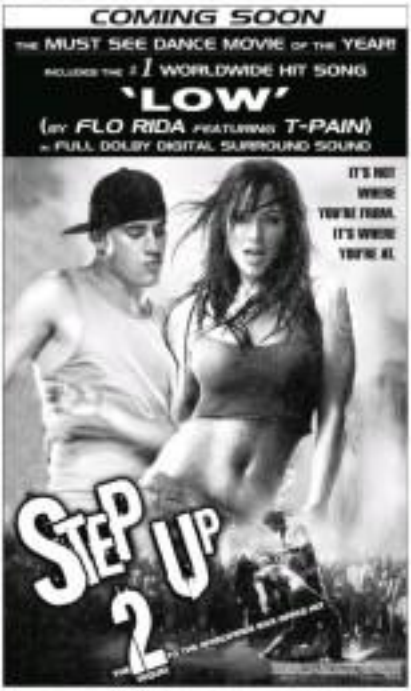
"Numero," edited in Olongapo for "processing" is a production of Giant Sponge Inc. and Produksiyon Tarmosinma Inc.

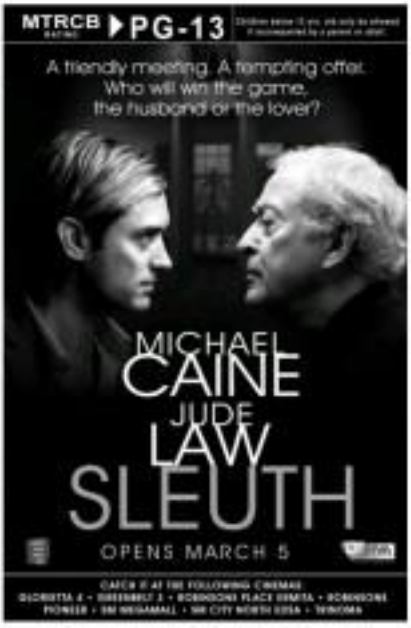
"Bonoc," produced by Marfil's Kinetic Productions, stars violinist Alfredo "Critic" Buhjasin in the lead. Real life child prodigy Juliana Dagpin will also be part of the film.

Dagpin has just earned a scholarship to the famed Juilliard School in New York.

(Email: mcruz@inquirer.com.ph)







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Courting Jay Leno

LOS ANGELES—JAY LENO HAS MORE TWO YEARS LEFT ON "THE TONIGHT Show," but rival networks are said to be quietly offering to keep him on the late-night circuit. ABC and Fox are said to have let Leno know they were eager to talk once the negotiating window in his NBC contract opens. Reuters

DARLING Cody, Oscar winner for Best Original Screenplay for *Juno*, shows off her diamonds.

Overheard in and around H'wood this week

WILL FERRELL, STAR OF "SEMI-PRO," about a fictional ABA basketball team, on to the "Do 'I was so into the locomotion' shit. No joke. I bought a Liberty Bell necklace that was pregnant."

• Halle Berry, talking about her drug use on "The Oprah Winfrey Show": "It got to a point where, whenever I heard the kick drop, I'd be like, 'Oh, God, no.' It took the years after stopping the cocaine before I was able to enjoy a concert and the sound of birds."

• Halle Cody, on showing the $1 million diamond-heel shoes designed for her by Stuart Weitzman to wear on Oscar's red carpet (she wore gold flats to accept the Original Screenplay trophy for "Juno"): "It was a showy-publicity stunt."

CHEER FACTOR

• Jessica Alba, walking the red carpet before the Oscar telecast: "I'm not really terribly nervous. Being pregnant is like taking a sedative."

• Tilda Swinton, thanking "Michael Clayton" co-star George Clooney after winning the Best Supporting Actress Oscar: "Seeing you drink (six shot glasses) bourbon from Starsucker & Babies'—she saw with the nipples, every morning ... you rock man." AP

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McDonald's
Search for Champion Kids

Let your Champion Kids experience the Beijing Olympics

McDonald's believes a dream must be shared to come true. In 1968, McDonald's began supporting the Olympic dream by airlifting hamburgers to U.S. athletes at the Olympic Games who were homesick for their favorite food. As McDonald's celebrates over 30 years of Olympic partnership, we continue to support the hopes and dreams of millions around the world.

McDonald's Champion Kids is a global search for active, young individuals who possess the spirit and believe that they are champions in their own way. The chosen ones, together with their proud moms, will have their experience of a lifetime as they join other McDonald's Champion Kids from around the world and meet in Beijing, China for the Olympic Games! McDonald's hopes that this promotion will not only rouse children's interest in sports but will also make them believe that they, too, can achieve.

So how does one become a McDonald's Champion Kid? McDonald's is in search for kids who are skilled in more ways than one. A McDonald's Champion Kid is one who is bright, active, and has a big heart. His willingness to learn and his eagerness to achieve inspire others. These traits are what make a child go a long way, and McDonald's knows that these kids deserve to be rewarded.

McDonald's will send 5 kids to Beijing Olympics

Cheer on! Tuesday was a day of surprises as McDonald's launched its nationwide search for Champion Kids last February 27, 2008! Champion mom Mikee Cojuangco-Jaworski hosted the press launch and was warmly received by eager moms and excited kids! Drums were rolling, kids were cheering, and moms were smiling, all in this much awaited launch. A parade of Champions included McDonald's President Mr. Kenneth S. Yang, Philippine Olympic Committee President Mr. Jose "Peping" Cojuangco, ABS-CBN Representative "Kaya" Kim Atienza, along with the Ronald McDonald House Charities - Bright Minds Read kids! Ronald McDonald lit the torch as confetti covered the area. Excitement filled the air as people stretched to the bleachers, almost too eager to hear the news. Finally the word was out- McDonald's search for Champion Kids is on! Five lucky ones, along with their moms, will fly to Beijing China for an experience of a lifetime! Together with other McDonald's Champion Kids from other countries, they will see and feel the Olympics like no one has all experienced!

Now kids will be inspired to do their best in everything, and prove to others that they are champions in their own way. This search will run from March 1 to April 13 and will look for kids who embody the true spirit of a champion.

Kids can join via writing contest or via Soccer Mania event. On April 30, five lucky ones, along with their moms, will be chosen to fly to Beijing, China! ABS-CBN is the official media partner in this promotion, and they will be with these kids and their moms from start to finish.

Give your child the opportunity of a lifetime by enjoying the spectacle of the world's greatest sporting event – LIVE.

McDonald's Champion Kids Program will send five kids and their respective moms to the XXIX Beijing Olympics.

Just buy a Happy Meal, fill out an application form, and have your child write about the theme: "What makes you a McDonald's Champion Kid?" – or join McDonald's Soccer Mania – for a chance to fly to the Games, stay at the Olympic Village, and gain a lifetime of memories.

Promo valid from March 1 to April 15, 2008 | For All McDonald's in NCR, Areas of Mindanao

I Open to children from 5 to 12 years old. There are two easy ways to register for the McDonald's Champion Kids Program:

YOUR WRITING CONTEST

a. Purchase any McDonald's Happy Meal
b. Fill out the application form attached to the brochure.
c. Have the child answer the question in the space provided on the application form: "What makes you a McDonald's Champion Kid?"
Tell us about what you have been into that you think will encourage other kids to achieve greatness in whatever they do.
d. Submit the following on or before dates* at or before April 15, 5pm:
- Application form with the answer to the question written in English or Tagalog and the child's passport picture
- 4 photocopies of the accomplished application form with picture
- Receipt of Happy Meal Purchase
- Photocopy of the child's birth certificate
- ½ copies of the child's full body photo
- The child's medical certificate declaring that he is fit to travel

e. You may submit the requirements through the drop boxes found in any McDonald's restaurant nationwide. McDonald's will also visit selected schools for collection of entries (specific schools to be announced later).
f. The submitted requirements serve as your official entry.
g. Only one submission per person will be accepted.
h. Entries with incomplete or incorrect requirements will automatically be eliminated.
i. Preliminary screenings will be held on March 18, Metro Pk. and April 12 in the presence of a DTI representative at the 7th Floor Citibank Centre, Makati City.
j. Final judging will be held on April 15, 10am to 2pm, at Taal Vista Citibank Centre, Makati City in the presence of a DTI representative.
k. Criteria for screening/judging:
- Truthfulness in the theme – 25%
- Substance and originality of content – 40%
- Ability to express the thoughts in a clear and organized manner – 20%
- Impact of the write-up – 20%

l. Twenty finalists will be chosen from all the entries submitted.

YOUR SOCCER MANIA

a. Purchase any McDonald's Happy Meal.
b. Go to McDonald's Soccer Mania sales or have mama and papuan your point to purchase:
- March 1 & 2 – SM Clark
- March 7, 8 & 9 – SM Sapgan de Oro
- March 13, 15 & 16 – SM Bacolod
- March 20, 15 & 23 – SM Dagupan
- March 28, 29 & 30 – SM Cherry Antipolo
- March 31, April 1 & 2 – SM Fairview
- April 4, 5 & 6 – SM Bacoor
- April 11, 12 & 13 – SM Mall of Asia

c. Fill out the application form attached to the brochure.
d. Have the child's photo taken at the McDonald's Soccer Mania site.
e. Submit accomplished application form through the drop boxes in McDonald's Soccer Mania sites on or before April 15, 5pm.
f. The accomplished application form serves as your raffle entry.
g. Five finalists from McDonald's Soccer Mania will be drawn through a raffle on April 15 at Top of the 116 in the presence of a DTI representative.

2. All participants should have a passport valid at least a 6-month validity by August 1, 2008.
3. A confirmation can only win once. If the two have chosen as the winning contest, he is disqualified from entering in the McDonald's Soccer Mania raffle.
4. Among five finalists will receive McDonald's Champion Kids share over 10,000 worth of McDonald's Gift Certificates.
5. Finalists who become Kids Ching will not be accompanied to Beijing by their parent or legal guardian if selected as a winner must secure the necessary DSWD Travel Clearance and submit a photocopy to McDonald's on or before April 25, 2008.
6. Finalists will undergo an interview to be conducted by ABS-CBN on April 25. Based on the interviews, 3 winners will be chosen (2 from the writing contest, 1 from McDonald's Soccer Mania) in the presence of a DTI representative.
7. Criteria for judging:
a. Intelligence – 30% c. Confidence – 30%
b. Personality – 30% d. On-camera projection – 10%

8. All decisions made by the judges and McDonald's concerning the selection of the finalists and determination of the winners are final and not subject to challenge or appeal.
9. Winning child and his mom/legal guardian will receive the following prizes:
a. Roundtrip tickets to Beijing, China to watch the 2008 Olympics from August 7 to 18, 2008
b. Accommodations at the Olympic Village
c. Food and transportation during the trip
d. Complimentary arrangement of use
10. Provincial winners will also receive roundtrip tickets to Manila and hotel accommodations for the awarding ceremony.
11. Winners will be notified through phone and registered mail.
12. Prizes can be claimed during the awarding ceremony on April 30. Valid IDs (e.g. driver's license, school ID, passport) of the mom/legal guardian and the child must be presented to claim the prize.
13. Winners' passports will be submitted to McDonald's during the awarding ceremony for processing of visa.
14. Finalists and winners must comply to all the requirements of McDonald's in relation to the prizes, interview object their personal background, video coverage of activities in the house or school and any other press conference activities, interview of their family, close friends or other significant people in their lives (e.g. barrio, town), pre-event interviews, greetings, TV plugs and any other media coverage, participation in team building activities with the other finalists or winners), compliance to the set daily itinerary for the Beijing trip, daily updates on their Olympic experience throughout the duration of the trip to be used for TV, radio, print and internet, a post-event write-up about the experience, post-event interviews, greetings, TV plugs, and any other activity McDonald's deems fit for the Champion Kids Program.
15. Prizes are non-transferable and non-assignable to cash. In case winners opt to transfer their rights to the prize, the transferee must also be a child between 5 to 12 years old with a valid passport.
16. McDonald's shall shoulder the 20% tax on prizes.
17. Employees of Golden Arches Development Corporation, SSS Philippines, Discover Advertising Group Philippines, Creative Concepts, Inc., Exact Communications, Inc., CDB Inc., ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp., and participating outlets including their relatives up to the second degree of consanguinity or affinity are disqualified from joining the promo.

Screen rivals are off-screen pals

Between takes, they had fun booty dancing

Contributor

LOS ANGELES... WE CONCLUDE OUR REport on our recent interviews with Scarlett **Johansson** and **Natalie Portman** in New York. Since the two ladies are among the hottest young actresses today, their first film together as sisters vying for the love and favor of King Henry VIII (Eric Bana) in "The Other Boleyn Girl" is being anxiously awaited as a throwback to those days when pictures starring rival movie queens created much excitement. Like Nat's recent White ...

Off screen, the two lovely ladies have become friends. In between takes, they had fun booty-dancing while wearing their 16th century-era outrageous long wigs.

In addition to her outspoken support for Ob presidential contender Barack Obama, Scarlett is also very much in the news with the May release of her first album, "Anywhere I Lay My Head." Scarlett sings 10 covers of Tom Waits' lyrics and one original track that she and her producer

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD

Robert V. Nepales

Dave Stieb (of the rock band 10 on the Richter), composed. No less than **David Hasselhoff** sang backing vocals on two songs. Tom and David are reportedly impressed with Scarlett's baritone singing voice, which has been likened to **Debbie Harry's**.

Lucky guy

Scarlett is dating actor Ryan Reynolds while Natalie is linked to Nathan Bogle, a Brit who's a former model and co-founder of The Hug fashion line.

When Natalie was asked about Brit, the lucky guy who quit to have her and Scarlett as his leaves in the movie, she laughed and pointed to the back of the room. "He's back there," she said, looking at the Australian actor who appeared by the door, with a mischievous glint in his eyes. "Get out of here, Ryan," she jokingly told the man, hand warm in a black jacket.

When Eric complied, Natalie lavished him praises. "He's the best. As acclaimed as I was about working with Scarlett, I felt the same way about Eric. He just blows me away as 'Brandy' and 'Chopper.' He's one of the best actors working today. He's incredibly inventive, which is unusual these days. When we were casting, we thought, who else in a long? So many actors just seem like boys. It's hard to imagine most actors playing King Henry. He was just far and away the best."

Favorite love scene

When a reporter asked Scarlett a nonsex question, she was surprisingly thrown off. "My favorite love scene?" she repeated the question. "Hmm, that's a good question. I've never been asked that before. Well, I can pronounce the love scenes in 'Henry Dunning.' Maybe that's just a generational thing."

When Natalie was asked the same question, she replied, "I'd have to say—I know it's cheesy but when I was growing up, the one I searched over and over again was 'Henry Dunning.'" When told that was also Scarlett's choice, Natalie laughed and said, "Really? That's historical. That's our generation. I need to lower frame the tape so I could see Patrick Swayze's hair."

Buff, abrupt who used to ogle at Patrick's behind has grown up not only to be a talented actress but also, like Scarlett, a socially-conscious individual as well. She is an Ambassador of Hope for a foundation that provides funds to poor, would-be entrepreneurs around the world.

Volunteer work

"Goods for Peace (Foundation of International Community Assistance), an organization that you guys (OFW) have actually been generous with and for which I'm really grateful," Natalie said. "Evans gives small loans to women in developing nations so they can start their own businesses. It's an amazing way to help make a woman, who normally wouldn't have those opportunities, proactive in taking care of herself and not rely on a government, man or anyone to help her out."

"I do spend a lot of time traveling with this organization," she continued. "They're in 22 countries around the world. I've been doing fundraising and education awareness for them."

When a scene in which her character sings was brought up, Scarlett grinned and quipped, "I hope that's not the song I sing in the film or the indication as to what my album is going to sound like." Surprise—she answers is not joking. "But I do have an album coming out," she announced. "It's a collection of Tom Waits songs and an original track as well. I was approached to record an album after singing a song on an album for Woody Allen's, which is a wonderful organization. It was an opportunity that so many people I know would kill for. It was something I couldn't just pass up."

Not pop

"The album is not pop by any means," Scarlett elaborated. "It's very inspired and it was an amazing experience for me. I used my baritone singing voice."

"He gave his blessing," Scarlett said of her inspiration—Tom, the soft-voiced singer-songwriter. "He didn't participate in the actual recording or anything. But I wouldn't have done it if he was against it. From what I understand, he's very excited about the album and the way it turned out."

"I've always loved to sing," Scarlett continued. "I started when I was young so long because I always thought I would do musical theater. But my voice was so deep at the time. It was impossible for me to play a young Cosette."

E-mail rnepales_15@yahoo.com and read his blog, "The Inquirer Report," on http://blogs.inquirer.net/inquirerreport

NATALIE Portman

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ENTERTAINMENT

Yes, Regine is telling you . . . and you

By the Inquirer Entertainment staff

YES, YOU. TO SILENCE all manner of speculation concerning her "aborted" move to ABS-CBN, Regine Velasquez is reportedly singing the show-stopper "And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going" as opening number in GMA-7's "SOP" today.

Talk about subtle.

If the plan pushes through, the message to Kapamilya brod heavens would be loud and clear: "I'm staying. Nuwuuu, I'm staying ... and you're gonna love me!"

This was Regine's winning piece (along with "You'll Never Walk Alone") at the Asia Pacific song fest in 1989. She says confided to reporters that singing that song was "nostalgic." Then again, she told the ABS-CBN denials was just as "hurtful."

Stone cold silence

An observer noted how warmly the "The Buzz" staff welcomed Regine during the taping of her first interview on the network-hopping controversy.

The mood changed quickly.

Apparently, Regine's admission that she sure "hurt" by the denial had stifled more feathers. After the taping, the Ate told aliens: "Some people didn't even bother to say goodbye to her," said an insider.

KC vs Angel

ABS-CBN execs were reportedly holed up in Baguio recently, for the regular Baguiorbye planning meeting.

More projects for KC Concepcion or Angel Locsin? ABS-CBN supporters are dissatisfied over the apparent lack of plans for both.

Said a spy: "A top network exec wants to build up Angel Locsin first ... if only to prove that her transfer from GMA-7 was a wise move."

Ate up her sleeve

And they thought they had beat!

A source insists that a noteworthy star has an ace up her sleeve, one that could embarrass certain network honcho: "Concrete proof" that said coach led damaging facts needs to put her down.

Farewell Flaviravar

According to the grapevine, the Kapamilya network was wooing Imelda Marcos and Maggay Eduarda for memoirs in "Machinery" Broda episode, the grand wedding of its lead characters.

This exciting coup was promptly derailed by a Kapamilya initiative. The hit soap will be capped with a "wedding reception," airing live on March 14.

New Kapamilya shows

Andy Ant Sunday is breathing up on medical coordinator for her role as a nurse in her new ABS-CBN soap, tentatively titled "Humang Singkit." Mark Meily and Andoy Ranay will direct.

Meanwhile, Manuel Soriano (Claire Ann Aquino and Claudine Barretto as star of a Samar Bocor remake, the sole thriller "Florinda."

What the...

Got the angry—so, really angry—note in the e-mail:

"Is this true? An influential group [illegible] Nadal

• Nadia, iiwasan ng host-ot 2 mlawal series si Gretchen? (Dahay nahay?)

• Kay daw si Nadia Gerra, nasilaw ang pare!

• Gerra, hiniit si Dodie Puno ang taping kasama, at si Tony Ben Gonzaga??

• Tuti Gonzaga at Lulu Monteza, shocked sa grasyo ni Gerra! (Gerra hind shocked!)

Daily baby

• Updates si Dutch Garcia, di papasiin si Jennylyn Mercado! (She's not the first one, actually.)

• Gossiper ang nosh nina Jennylyn at PBSKID! (Curfew hour.)

• Grenyahan, sasambulan daw ng anting-anting nosh! (Swerte!)

• Sus avoidable nang gitnang kamali-an ni Ate sa mata ng publiko! (Budget-ing.)

• Nirenyahan, di magbabahol itay Patchil! (Patchil, relented. John!)

Conspicuous absences

• Mira Mitra, ripping sa labels! (Ehem, ehem ha!)

• Cristine Reyes at Bernie Wills, magbabalikan na? (Those who still care, show of hands, please.)

• Say ni Ara, si Dennis pa rin ang mine-miss ni Cristine! (Boots ni Sarah, please.)

• Dennis, nabi na nilk pa rin kay Cristine! (Hands down.)

• Ian, nagpapalusot ng publicity dating-ding sa sister niya! (Sa English, to-fanning ha!)

• Cristine at Willie Revillame, 'nag-milagro' sa Around My Swamper!

Pingpong week

• Regine Velasquez, nasilaw sa timer 3 na silbi ng ABS-CBN?

• Regine, pandong nawala ang (Isa at 2pala?) ("Ear ring ako.)

• Regine, nawawangis sa kakwang ding? (Are we still talking earwards here?)

• Regine, setting aldonites?? (Di wala-wat nabalita.)

• Regine, tandisan at jugal-dito ng ABS na may talbe ito at Asaya! (Kasi mga...)

Just talk it out

• Dina Bonnevie at Emelen Intia, nilalaro si Oya Boy-boy Rabilles (Bersamin! (Gowin or feminize, in fairness.)

ABSTRACT Marimita: The beautiful prize.

•Oya, sobrang inspirado sa pasilip, gaw kay Ben Gonzaga! (Gawin kasi.)

•Mother Dionisio at Oya, nag-away sa lang dapat? (Landia gaw-do.)

True or false

•Glaiza Herradura, lalo na all si Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sweet ng Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sweet ng Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sabi Manzanas, lalo na all si Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sweet ng Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sweet ng Sen. Serge Revilla! (Sweet?)

•Sweet ng

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ROCK ICON AS ARTIST

Rolling Stones guitarist Ronnie Wood proudly poses in front of his painting, "A Study of Curlos and Dumpy Rehearsing," on display at the Royal Academy of Arts in London.

AFP

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Dishing the 'dirt'

'SHOCK AND SCHLOCK' tabloid entertainment journalism has become a billion-dollar industry in the United States, and its amazing efforts are visible on that nation's social fabric for everyone to see—and get "schlocked" by.

But the industry that produces as much off-putting yet titillating celebrity gossip is by no means a monolithic enterprise that's easy to dismiss as a pop-cultural aberration. It is, in fact, a complex, high-stakes game that exploits, not just "selling stars" wholesome and cut-rate, but also the wealthy and riveting public's seemingly unquenchable thirst for "dirt."

The shared obsession says volumes about people's need to wallow in nastiness, and to delight in celebrities' misery. It's as if "ordinary" people resent the fact that celebrities are more famous and richer than they are, and are just waiting for them to stumble and fall, so they can feast on their fall-from-on-high-associated schadenfreude.

All too well do we play the villains' role inside by pointing fingers at where the celebrity carcasses are lying, the tabloid media are a high-stakes business as, it's extremely safe that the Abbott Channel's new TV series, "Dirt," (Sundays, 10 p.m.) should strive to get under its skin and explore its billion-and-controlled wounds.

Smelly gooch

Showing the new series to an interactive and even unanimously mind-blowing experience, because it takes us into "investigative" unknown or rogue territory. With Courtney Cox playing the series' resident tabloid magazine editor, the show reveals how some shows' hit journalists are able to get the smelly gooch on the big stars they're gossiping after.

A female star is pregnant but doesn't want anybody to know about it, because it would affect the tightened trajectory of her career. She doesn't telling/truly about her pregnancy—other than her best friend. How to get the best friend to spill the beans? Her lover wants to be a star down on his luck and in need of an assist from the magazine, so he's "persuaded" to expose the pregnancy.

Also, the pregnant star, now exposed, OD's on drugs, so as this is classier, at least, dishing the dirt ends in tragedy. That may not be fun for the cameo for most show biz scoops, but it adds a decidedly pre-Ethnic, cautionary note to the dirt-proceedings.

That's only one example of the "brilliantly evil" ways that the tabloid magic editor thinks up to get the dirt on glittering stars and their smarmy private lives.

Media risen

Cox does well as the series' resident media whore, but she's upstaged by the even more cartoonishly performance turned in by Ian. Kind of best chief plus-together and all-around dirty manager. The role is made even less by the fact that the phony-cypher's character is not as cyni-

Connick: No one is more excited about RP gig than I am

By Pochade Cornejolean

HARRY CONNICK JR. WAS only 5 when he learned to play the piano. At 6, he gave his first public performance. By the time he was 10, he had recorded with a jazz band.

No one either was born in the birthplace of jazz, New Orleans, and raised by lawyer parents who fully supported his artistic inclinations. It was no wonder that he became a successful musician. Success he was good-looking, too, movie roles came naturally as well.

After 23 albums (10 were no number one in the charts), 16 films (credits and seeing the world as a touring musician, Connick Jr., now 40, is performing on March 15 at the SMX, with his own big band.

Your parents owned a record store. Was that the reason you took music seriously?

My parents had the record store long before I was born, but I remember there was always music playing in the house and I grew up in New Orleans, a city where there was music everywhere. So it's a combination of having very supportive parents and being around music all the time that inspired me to play the piano.

Tell us about growing up and pursuing a music career. Did you have as much fun as the regular guys?

I had a wild time, a great childhood—and I went to normal schools. Much of my free time was spent playing music. I got the chance to play with a lot of great, great musicians.

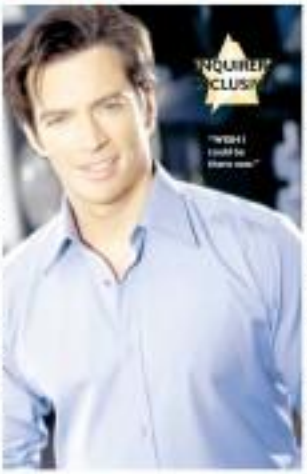
How did you deal with initial success, like when the "Harry Connick Jr." soundtrack went double-platinum?

I wanted it to be successful but I had no idea it was going to be that huge. My parents raised me up to be grateful for anything that could happen later in life. I think I handled that pretty well. It was very exciting and it was a great chance to play music all over the country.

What were the low points in your career and how did you overcome them?

Some people may have a record that doesn't sell well and they get very upset. I had a record that flopped, but it didn't bother me. I had a movie that didn't do well at the box office but it didn't bother me, either.

You've experimented with different music forms like funk.



How did you take it when some of your fans reportedly did not appreciate it?

I have to be happy first. If I'm not doing something that makes me happy, I absolutely can't check this audience. I was well aware that many people did not like it when I was playing funk music, but I was aware, with that because it was something that I wanted to do. My second compassion was happy in fact there were some people who liked it even more than current music.

Why do you love jazz? And is there anything that you hate about it, too?

You know, I don't really hate anything about jazz music. Sometimes I don't like the way I play because I get in very upsets books and sometimes you don't live up to your own expectations. There are times when you're trying to create something and it's not coming out right. But I don't hate it, that's just part of the process of playing jazz.

I love the fact that it's on live. It's been so many years that I've been trying to learn how to play it, and now it's... so satisfying. It really is fun.

What's the greatest thing that has happened to you lately?

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What's the greatest thing that has happened to you lately?

There are four greatest things that have happened. One was marrying my wife and the next is about the birth of my three children. It doesn't get any better than that. My last child was born five years ago and a lot of things have happened since then.

Your latest album "Oh, My Stella" (Sony BMG) was released only last year.

That was a really fun record. It reminded me a lot of my youth because I played so many kinds of music while growing up—jazz, smooth jazz, modern jazz, R&B, gospel ... It's kind of nice to get back to the sounds that I haven't played in a long time.

Are you doing another movie after "It's Have You"?

I just filmed "Chills in Miami" with Renee Zellweger. She did some great acting and she's a lot of fun to be with. I think it will be out sometime this year.

What are your thoughts on your forthcoming concert in Manila?

I've never been to the Philippines so I'm really, really excited. One thing I could say to the people is that they've never gotten me somebody who is more excited than me. I wish I could come over there right now.

First batch of 'Idol' rejects not sore

By Fran Kierlgbak

IS THE FIRST BATCH of contestants voted off this season's 'American Idol' a sore bunch?

One of the youngest in the show, Garrett Haley seems to handle the boot—and Simon Cowell's tough remarks—pretty well.

In an exclusive phone interview arranged by StarWorld with Inquirer Entertainment, the 17-year-old laughed off criticism from the acerbic judge who told him he lacked "an if you've been shut up in your bedroom for about a month ... you never sang for real."

"You know Simon—maybe he just couldn't find anything bad about my voice," said Haley. "When he said I had white skin, there's really nothing I could get out of that except for, 'I'm tanning,' which I wouldn't do, but I thought it was pretty funny."

Haley recalled how joining the show also brought attention to his long mop of curls, which drew comparisons with British musicians Jesse Frampton and American singer Leif Garrett.

Pretty happy

"I was hoping they were downer-looking and talented," he said of the time he dangled the axioms. "I was pretty happy ... When his name was called, I was the same battery."

While folks from his hometown are probably upset about his leaving the show, Haley only had this to say: "I'm happy that I'm going home, because I'm going home to my beautiful girlfriend, my friends, my family and school."

The first female voted off the show, Amy Dunn left with a good piece of advice from judge Paula Abdul. "You really need to know who you are as an artist."

"I didn't just hit home for me ... anybody who tries out for 'American Idol' should take that to heart," said Dunn. "You can't be out there saying, 'I don't know who I am, but I'm trying to be something.'"

The 23-year-old Texan lounged to a loop of vocal duets in Indiana. Before the show, she had performed in weekend gigs with a group from the "Gilmore" reality series who lived in Stars Hollow.

Dunn said her AI experience exposed her to how a huge television show is put together and it is from this that she derives her advice on signing "Idol" contestants.

"There are so many people involved and it's inspired seeing them at work. Say attention. Take notes. Stay grounded (and) take as much as you can from the [experience]."

They all vow to go on singing, and one says the AI experience, in fact, 'opened 80 billion more doors' for her

TV experience

Antoine Borgella, the 2006 winner of televised 'beauty pageant "Miss Queens For Chance," is not new to the TV experience.

Asked in retrospect the shows she had joined on the 25-year-old said, "The pageant was a run-hour special, but "American Idol" in general ... I don't think anything you've done in your life can prepare you for what you go through."

Borgella felt the judges were on-pointing her to sing a certain way.

"People tend to think [women] my men] sing sets and ... but that's not the kind of performer I am," she said. "I love doing power ballads, but I also want to do songs you dance to as a club. You don't usually associate that with a place like women but to someone [one versus] with] body image."

For from being body-conscious, the plus-size model was under contract with the Wilhelmina modeling agency, which she had to give up to be "Idol."

While she may have had a brief exposure on the show, the New Jersey native believed putting her modeling career on hold was worth pursuing her passion for singing.

"Singing if it comes to No. 1," said Borgella, "I want to have an album, continue modeling and act (eg, which I seem to school for I'm a child) ladies. At last just opened 80 billion more doors [for me]."

Optimistic

Eighteen-year-old Colton Berry is just as optimistic about his singing career even if Cowell told him to find a "good job" instead.

"Simon's job is to be Simon Cowell," Berry said. "But I kept in mind that, where he said that comment, he did pick the Top 24 out of hundreds of thousands of people. Obviously we're all going in with our own minds anyway."

The singer said his two-decade in life seems to be an "American Idol" and so broadening to be lucky all the time, Berry hopes it will lead to the second one.

He plans to pursue theater by setting up as many auditions as possible but for now he returns to LA to direct his local community theater's production of "The Wiz," which opens this week.

In the meantime, he points his at how his looks would get him the attention he needs.

"One day I looked in the mirror and I was, like, 'maybe everyone is right, maybe I really look like Elton [Augustus],' so I figured I might as well embrace it," said Berry.

"I know that the called Ryan Seacrest and was laughing with Ryan about the comments that I said [on Idol]. Hopefully if she is touching Dr. Dre, give me a call."

Haley Dunn, Borgella and Berry were sent home last week. This week, four more finalists were dropped from the list—Alexandria Lamington, Alaina Whitaker, Jason Yeager and Brooke Lorene. We will have another evaluate feature on them later this week.

* * *

"American Idol" Season 7 airs live Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 8 p.m., on your world and GTV, with same-night replays on StarMetro at 8 p.m. and 11:30 p.m.

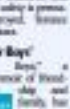
NOW ON DISC

'The Brave One'

THE MGM horror-thriller "The Brave One," directed by Neil Jordan, stars Jodie Foster as Erica Bain, host of a New York radio show whose life is shattered by a brutal attack that leaves her fiancé (Nicolas Anderson) dead. Her body is shattered and her sense of safety is gone, newly shattered, Erica threatens to use.

'December Boys'

"December Boys," a poignant story of friendship and family, has been re-issued by Warner Home Video. The movie marks Daniel Radcliffe's first major film role outside the "Harry Potter" series.



He plays Misa, big brother to the boys in the orphanage where they live with some hefty scrapes. —December

'Sarah Geronimo in Motion'

Pinoy Vhs Video comes with "Sarah Geronimo in Motion, the Concert."

It showcases Sarah's Amnesia Collaborations, concert with guest performers Gary Valenciano, Billy Crawford, Mark Bautista, Zsa Zsa Padilla and Ai Ai de las Alas.

The package includes a backstage behind-the-scenes feature.

'The Invasion'

From Warner Home Video comes Jack Finney's classical novel "The Invasion," which stars Nicole Kidman as Carol Bennell, a Washington, DC psychiatrist whose world changes after the remnants of a space shuttle explosion rain over the U.S. Also starring Daniel Craig.

Reality trumps fantasy in 'Spiderwick Chronicles'

LOS ANGELES—"The Spiderwick Chronicles" may not be in the same fantasy league as the tales of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis and J.K. Rowling, yet the mostly flick based on the books of Tony DiTerlizzi and Holly Black is an all-around class act, even if its world of sprites and goblins is often rude in the wake of its more misfortune cousins in the over-the-rainbow genre.

The human characters are the main source of wonder. Freddie Highmore, Sarah Bolger and Mary-Louise Parker authentically capture the frustrated spirit of a family newly cast into single-parent mode. David Strathairn adds a restful streak as a naturalist who fails to notice how his devotion to a magical realm has cut him off from the marvels of everyday life.

For more modern class films tuned on Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings," "Spiderwick" actually becomes more pedestrian the further it wanders from reality. Hollywood has become so adept at conjuring up computer generated imagery and elves and other beasties that the unremarkable creatures here seem commonplace, and uninspiring, by comparison.

The story

Newly divorced Helen Grace (Parker), twin sons Jared and Simon (played by Highmore) and their older sister, Mallory (Bolger), move to the beautiful New England home given to them by her great aunt.

Jared has serious anger issues over his parents' split. Simon's sweet and bookish and Mallory tries to keep the boys in line to help out her struggling mom.

REVIEW

Aunt Lucinda (Joan Plowright) is now in a rest home, having spent her life in fear of the evil creatures in the surrounding woods. Her dad, Arthur Spiderwick (Strathairn), documented the unseen world of fairies and monsters in a book before vanishing 60 years ago.

Magic-dabbling rapscallion Mulgarath (Nick Nolte) covets the book, whose secrets would allow him to take over the world. He sends his gang of goblins against the family after Jared finds the book.

Martin Short provides the voice of the fast-talking brownie Hogsqueak who has been protecting the book for decades. Seth Rogen adds to the fun as super fast sexually

ambiguous talking sewage squirrel Mulgarath.

Director Mark Waters crafts a surprisingly brisk adventure given the ponderous running times of recent fantasy films. The movie is a lot better than the trailers suggest.

Parker's tone grounded in real-world domestic matters here (unlike she is on TV as the quirky pot-dealing mom in "Weeds." Highmore injects Jared and Simon with distinct personalities and allows them.

The creatures are far less imaginative, mostly upset, clumsy jabbering little guys that look like Jabberjaw muppets.

Grizzled, feisty, intrepid and unfailingly encouraging Nolte has still a lot to explore and wastes those anything others people would ever dream up. —David Germain, AP